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TRAVELS IN ENGLAND

Richard Le Gallienne

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Miss Mary McClellan

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Miss Mary McClellan

Travels in England

Travels in England

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TRAVELS IN ENGLAND

By RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
HERBERT RAILTON

JOHN LANE · *THE BODLEY HEAD*
NEW YORK AND LONDON · MDCCCC

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Travels in England

CHAPTER I

TO SELBORNE THROUGH WOOLMER FOREST

General attitude of the traveller — Some advantages of ignorance — The best way with nature — Cobbett and Hindhead — Country ignorance — Summer-sadness — Selborne chancel — Gilbert White's grave — An apology for Francis Gastrell — A stuffed nightjar — Climbing the Hanger.

THERE is one great advantage in not knowing the world: you attain novelty of impression at so small an expense. In many ways I have found my ignorance of most things a magic safeguard of the wonder of the world. So long as one remains ignorant, there are no discoveries one may not make, it matters not how often they have been made before. The other day in a Surrey lane, a friend, equally ignorant, and my-

self made the heart-beating discovery of a wild kind of Arum lily growing by the roadside. Its exquisitely pale green cup, shaped like a hollow soaring flame, seemed a shrine for the delicate purple stamen, or it seemed as though the flower put up a frail hand to guard its treasure from the wind. We felt sure that no human eye had ever beheld this wonder before, though it was growing socially in considerable numbers by the public road. We invented various wonderful theories to account for it, deciding that it must be a "garden-escape," — and we swelled with pride as we used so knowing an expression. But, however named or accounted for, the flower gave us a thrill of strangeness, momentarily quickened our sense of the mystery of beauty. The rarest orchid in Brazil could have done us no greater service of novelty. We returned home radiant with discovery, bunches of the strange flowers in our hands.

"Why!" exclaimed Persephone ("herself a fairer flower"), as we hastened

eagerly across the lawn to where she was taking tea under the apple-tree, "you've been gathering Lords and Ladies; I haven't seen any since I was a girl."

Our discovery was at least as old as Shakespeare, and our mysterious flower had been known to Persephone all her life!

Naturally we were crestfallen as botanists — but, after all, how fortunate our ignorance had been; what a rare moment it had given us — and were not the evils of knowledge illustrated by the poor exchange Persephone had given us for our mystery? To know that these were Lords and Ladies — what did the paltry scrap of information matter! It was so much more important to think them the rare remarkable things we had first thought them. And so I am never envious of the knowing ones of this world. Their knowledge always reminds me of little boys throwing stones into mysterious lakes. They make a great clatter, but the silence was more wonderful.

It is then in this spirit of ready wonder that I mount my wheel, and invite I know not what of new and dangerous in the ten miles between Hindhead and Selborne. Were I a great traveller, I should deem it necessary to seek strangeness and loneliness in some long and arduous journey to distant waste places of the earth. Such is one of the fallacies of the imagination created by quick travelling. We cover the miles so swiftly and in so many directions, that we forget how superficial a thing mere speed is, and, because we know the names of the stations that flash by, we grow to think that we know the world. We are so taken up with the thousands, that we forget that the real value is in the separate unit.

We smile at old topographers such as White of Selborne, to whom a few miles of pine-wood and scattered heath was a mysterious "forest" inhabited by strange beasts and birds, and to whom Frensham Pond was a "great lake at about six miles from hence." Yet they were nearer the

truth than we, and perhaps the reason is not that they knew less—for in many respects they knew more — but that they went slower. Nature has nicely adjusted her measures of revelation. She will not confide her secrets to the man in a hurry. Man was born a pedestrian, and it is only at a walking pace, an easy loitering pace too, with many pondering halts, that Nature can really be got to talk. She flies before the scorching cycle like a frightened bird — though, if you are content with an easy rippling speed, you may often, thanks to your pneumatic tires, steal upon her unawares. Yet it is only when you hide your cycle among the bracken, and unconcernedly pretend you are a pedestrian, to whom time and space are no objects, that you can really know even a few acres of this England which every one pretends he knows, as every one pretends he knows Shakespeare. Then, as one by one her silences steal back from their hiding places, and hop, and peck, and sigh, and whisper, and gloom and sparkle

about you, you begin to realise how vast a single square mile can be, when it is covered with trees and underbrush, what vast rivers of sunshine it drinks in, for what depths and secrecies of shade it finds room; and particularly you will be surprised to realise how profound and primeval is the solitude in a single square mile. Then perhaps you arrive at some such definition of speed as this: Speed is a method by which we miss as much as possible between our starting point and our destination. Yes, the wells of Time and Space are deeper than we allow ourselves to understand; and as a year is a very long time, and five years, literally, one of our many life-times, so a square mile of space is quite sufficiently vast and significant to justify old White in describing the few square miles of Woolmer Forest much as an explorer nowadays speaks of the Central Asian Desert.

I hope no one will think from the particularity with which I have headed this chapter, that I propose being laboriously

conscientious in choosing or in treating the various ostensible objects of these travels and explorations in our little-known country. To prevent misconception, I may as well state that, however many names of pilgrim-sought destinations I may give it, my chief object is to be out in green places, and moving through summer-scented air, for as many hours of sunshine as the next two or three weeks may be able to provide. I have not the smallest intention of competing with the excellent guide-books on which — like any other "explorer" — I shall rely. I go forth neither in an antiquarian capacity, nor in the capacity of a naturalist — though I may catch a butterfly or two on the way, and I shall often listen to birds singing. For information as to the nature of the soils over which I pass, it will be necessary to seek elsewhere, though I may sometimes be able to state that in certain districts my tires grew ochre-coloured, and in others grew white with chalk. On details of population and industries I shall

be dumb — though if I come across anyone making rainbows for a living, the reader shall be duly informed. You see what a useful book I propose to write!

At the same time, it is well to pretend that one has an object. Deliberate, self-conscious idling is apt to seem a little like work. Idleness should be without plan or forecast, and should come accidentally when we quite intended to be busy. A quarter of an hour before starting I had seriously consulted a map, merely looking out for some of "those names that bring a perfume in the mention." North, south, east, or west—it mattered nothing in what direction that place should lie. So it was that I came upon Selborne. Then Selborne had another advantage. It was near home. If I grew sick at heart, or if the doubtful weather suddenly made up its mind to deluge, I could scorch back with the dripping evening star to the little lonely house in an oubliette of pine-trees, with Persephone knitting and the babes asleep.

Then there was Gilbert White too. I will make no pretence at being steeped in "The Natural History of Selborne." I confess that it has never taken hold of me like "The Compleat Angler," for the good reason, I fancy, that Walton, with all his innocence, possessed a much greater literary gift than White, and I cannot rid myself of the old idea that the literary gift has something to do with the writing of lasting books. The charm of White's book is analogous to the charm of watching a child acquire information which has long been common knowledge — quaint ignorance changing into quaint knowledge. A similar quaintness is, of course, a part of Walton's charm. But it is only a part, and it is as a cunningly devised pastoral, written with a pen made of honeysuckle, that "The Compleat Angler" continues to hold us. Walton belongs to art, White to science — but it is that same half mythological science which made Walton's pages romantic with the names of Ashmole and Aldrovandus. When you come

to think of it, White was the one and only patron saint for such a voyaging as mine. Have I not already illustrated my own mode of travel by a reference to his? To visit his tomb was a pious preliminary of setting-out most natural, and would, moreover, give an appearance of orderliness to my travels.

I will pass over the parting that was likely enough to be exchanged for a meeting again before nightfall. At last I stood on the Portsmouth road —

> "The world before me —
> The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose."

I must not begin with too many particulars, or they may be expected of me throughout. Every cyclist knows the Portsmouth road between the Hutts, Hindhead, and the Anchor, Liphook. It is one of the kindest, heavenliest bits of road in England. Flying must be something like the ecstasy in which you sweep past the Seven Thorns Inn, out into the arms of the morning on Bramshott Com-

mon. It cannot be more than three or four square miles of rolling heather, bounded to right and left by woodland, but as your lungs drink in the air, and your eyes drink in the boundless horizons away yonder over the downs, it seems limitless space; and if you are not singing by the time you reach the danger post at the foot of the common, you cannot have a song in you. By singing I mean any form of voice-production indicating joy—the kind of private inarticulate grown-up baby sounds of happiness one makes only when we are quite sure no one is by, and which we blush to have overheard: the absurd improvisations of a glad heart.

At Liphook I always think of two writers, both masters of English prose: Pater and Cobbett. Of Pater, because I fancy I am not mistaken in believing that the present incumbent was his tutor; and of Cobbett, because Liphook and Hindhead gave him occasion for one of the most characteristic passages in the

"Rural Rides." Cobbett, travelling from Hambledon to Thursley, had a rooted objection to going over Hindhead, then a lonely and lawless spot. His design was to make his way round the base of that terrific hill-top, through Headley, a village situated, as one might say, among the foot-hills. But, whenever he inquired his way, he was invariably answered: "You must go to Liphook, sir." "But," shouted Cobbett, in a fine outburst, "I will not go to Liphook." Nor did he, though as it proved it would have been better to have done so.

However, the wilful Cobbett had his way, and though it was late in the evening, with rain coming on, when he reached Headley, he determined to prosecute his journey, refreshed with some cold bacon, bread, and milk, and furnished with a countryman to act — too soon it proved — as a blind guide to Thursley. After much wandering about over wild heaths in a rainy moonlight, the guide came to a standstill. He had lost his

way, and one can pity him, even after this lapse of time, exposed as he immediately was to Cobbett's fine flow of stern Saxon prose. Apart from the inconvenience, there was this galling circumstance, that they had made a halt within a few hundred yards of "the buildings called 'The Hut'" — so poor Cobbett was obliged to cross "that miserable hill" of Hindhead after all.

The "Anchor" at Liphook is a fine specimen of the old English inn both inside and out. Externally it is quite a picture-book hostelry, with its quaint gables and windows, and its enormous chestnut standing guard before the door. I always find it a difficult inn to pass, and, as there are some excellent maps of the district in the smoke-room, I dismounted for a quarter of an hour to consult them. They proved to be very learned maps, and told me far more than I felt I could use — down to the exact situation of every "military well" in Woolmer Forest, a region infested with soldiery and overrun

with sham warfare at certain times of the year.

In some respects maps are a mistake. They dishearten you with previous information, and rob you of the stimulus of personal discovery. To read of "military wells" in Woolmer Forest despoiled the imagination, or sent it off on undesirable flights; and, however lonely and untrodden the forest might seem, I should feel that in a sense it was a spurious loneliness — a loneliness duly supplied with an admirable water supply on modern principles. Still, I confess that I forgot this fear as I suddenly swept out of a green lane, across a little bridge, which explicitly denied any responsibility for the passage of persons weighing more than five tons, and out on to a ragged expanse of heather and pine. It was like coming upon an eagle in a field of buttercups, for up to the forest's very door the country is all pastoral, — milk and honey and cheese, — then suddenly, with a turn of the lane, an irreclaimable wild is in front of you, a swarthy

land of savage browns and blacks and greys, in exchange for the gentle greens and blues just behind you. To the left, some yards from the road, a little yellow inn and some nondescript outhouses, like a hen and chickens, have gone to sleep on a straggling edge of common. I make a little detour to read the sign : The Deer's Hut. That makes one forget the military wells, striking a note of ancient forestry. Away above the Deer's Hut, and parallel with the road for two or three miles, glooms a straight wall of dark hill, with here and there a pine clump standing out against the sky. This is Weaver's Down — another name of a fitting suggestiveness. Is it because the Fates are weavers that the word "weaver" seems charged with a certain uncanny significance ; or is my feeling — if indeed, it exists at all, for others — an inheritance from the slight awe with which weavers, lonely skilled men as their craft made them, were no doubt regarded of old by country-folk? Then the spider is a dark

and secret weaver, and it is well known that evil spells are always woven.

Whatever the reason, there seemed to me something appropriate to the dark solitariness of the scene in the sound of Weaver's Down; and, lest I should appear too fanciful, let the reader compare the effect of that name upon his imagination with the effect of such a name as, say, Miller's Dale. Miller's Dale suggests jolly, open-hearted greenery, buttercups and daisies and sentiment. There is not such a difference between the two trades of weaver and miller, as to account for the undeniable darkening and brightening of the mind, produced respectively by the two names. You would expect to hear of murder on Weaver's Down. In Miller's Dale one would fear nothing more dangerous than a picnic.

The road runs straight on, between scattered pines and pleasant green ditches filled with tiny water plants, sometimes lit with the splendid gold of the king-cup. Nothing is to be seen except solitude; a

crow noisily breaking the silence, and an old man unobtrusively breaking stones, being parts of it.

I ask the old man why yonder ridge is called Weaver's Down — but, of course, the old man has no idea. No one knows anything of the country in the country, nor does any one want to know. If you are at a loss for the name of a bird or a flower, it is of no use to ask a countryman. The people who know about birds and flowers are to be found on the Underground Railway, wistfully dreaming of their yearly fortnight by —

> "Shallow rivers to whose falls
> Melodious birds sing madrigals."

It is the Cockney who is your true nature-lover. I remember once imparting to a countryman the abstruse natural fact that tadpoles turned into frogs — but he would n't believe me. Nay, he brought all his household together to laugh me to scorn. They had evidently never heard anything quite so amusing as that. What

notions these towns-folk do have of the the country, to be sure!

I left the old stone-breaker to an occupation which, compared with the practice of literature, has much to recommend it; and I was once more alone with the silent forest and the fairy tick-tack of my cyclometer. The mention of that little machine leads me to ask a question of interest to cyclists: Do cyclometers flatter? I am inclined to think that, just the least bit in the world, they do. I have not yet verified my suspicions, so will venture upon no definite statement at present. There are no milestones through Woolmer Forest, and, if the cyclometer really does overrate our exploits, maps, I have found, are a little inclined to underrate them. Still, I do certainly seem to cover the ground nowadays as I never did before I had a cyclometer.

After about two miles of level the road breasts a brief, sharp hill, from the top of which the forest opens out wide to the view. The pines have ceased, and it is all

up and down stretches of heath, seamed here and there by footpaths, one of them running round the flank of Weaver's Down, in, I suppose, the direction of Liss, a busy little place, which, for all this loneliness, is not so far away. Directly facing one on the horizon rises a broad white cliff, one of a series of those sudden hills which are locally called Hangers. This is Hawkley Hanger, and once more one thinks of Cobbett — his enthusiasm at the prospect to be gained from the summit, and his vividly-described difficulties in getting himself and his horse down to the level country. It is beneath such a hanger that Selborne lies, but as yet Selborne Hanger is hidden in the windings of the land. A brief spin brings one to the crest of a hill overhanging a little village, through which one is to reach pastoral country once more. Before I drop down again among the cattle and the bee-hives, I take a last look at the dark forest stretching as far as the eye can see to the right. It has only been the eastern end of the

forest that I have gone through. Really to penetrate its depths one would need to leave one's bicycle and go on foot. Did I not say that Nature is for the pedestrian? By the roadside stand two spick and span military tents, but no red-coats are to be seen. Presently I pass one of them walking with the proudest girl in the village. The summer manœuvres are beginning. How much will those tents mean to that little village before the summer ends!

Greatham presently flies by, a prosperous-looking little village of no special individuality. A few yards beyond it a sign-post warns you to turn sharp to the right if you would find Selborne. The main business of the road is with Liss and Petersfield. This, I suppose, was the very corner where Cobbett reined up a moment on being told by his guide: "That road goes to Selborne."

"This put me in mind of a book," he writes, "which was once recommended to me, but which I never saw, entitled 'The History and Antiquities of Selborne' (or

something of that sort), written, I think, by a parson of the name of White, brother of Mr. White, so long a Bookseller in Fleet Street. This parson had, I think, the living of the parish of Selborne. The book was mentioned to me as a work of great curiosity and interest. But, at that time, the THING was biting so very sharply that one had no attention to bestow on antiquarian researches. Wheat at 39*s.* a quarter, and Southdown ewes at 12*s.* 6*d.*, have so weakened the THING's jaws and so filed down its teeth, that I shall now certainly read this book if I can get it."

The "Thing" was the pressing social question ever hot in Cobbett's heart. What would he think, one wonders, if he could come back and see so much that he fought for gone on the wind, the oppressor as firm in the saddle as ever? What would he think could he read some of the ingenious prophecies of the terrible future of the world being made by a certain young novelist born some thirty years ago in yonder town of Liss? Let us not

sadden his well-earned sleep with these whispers of a darkening world.

That lane led not only to Selborne, but to very summer. Summer in a pine-country is little more than a slight change of mourning. Like an inconsolable widow, it will only consent to mark the season by such austere renewal of costume as may pass all but unnoticed. And yet, for all its gloom, a pine-wood is nothing like so sad as the green and flowery summer at its greenest and floweriest height. Who has not known that poignant summer-sadness, which comes with the thickening of the grass and the rich crowding of the leaves, with the sound of steam-scythes and the scent of the wild rose? With the opening of the wild rose summer is made perfect. Then is its one brief moment of crowned completeness — and the moment is mysteriously sad, as all moments of supreme attainment are: the moment of a flame in its splendour, the moment of a bird's song in mid-rapture, the one perfect

moment of a girl's beauty; for truly all these things, in the ecstasy of their fulfilment, endure but for a moment. Perhaps some of the sadness lies in the assured look they wear of enduring thus in their abundance and bloom for ever. Yet to how few suns may a wild rose open and shut its eager flower-face, before its petals are making sweet the dust, its beauty already hardening to an autumn berry!

How terribly sad is the waving of the already seeded grass yonder! Is it because one has seen it waving thus over graves?

> "O magic overture of Spring,
> O Summer like an Eastern King,
> O Autumn, splendid widowed Queen,
> O Winter, alabaster tomb,
> Where lie the regal twain serene,
> Gone to their yearly doom."

The pathos of the wild rose, and the solemnity of summer foliage. The remainder of the way to Selborne, I did little but ponder upon these matters, walking the while one or two considerable

hills. For, round Selborne long ago there was evidently a great commotion of the land. It seems to have risen up in great billows, like Atlantic rollers, and been suddenly struck stationary as at the stopping of a tune. And now along the crest of the huge land waves great trees flourish, and the steep troughs of the waves are covered with green meadow grass. It is a country of green hill and green hollow sharply alternating, full of fascinating nooks and turns and swift sweeps of steep lawn. Selborne rides on one of the broadest of these green crests, overshadowed by the Hanger, as by an updrawn wave enchanted into immobility in the very act to break. No doubt it is more White nowadays than Selborne, as Stratford is more Shakespeare than Stratford, and yet when you have made your sacrifice of sentiment at White's grave, you are sure to linger in the place for its own sake, and if you climb the Hanger you will feel that White was a secondary object of pilgrimage after all.

But let us first make that sacrifice of sentiment. The village that straggles, one longish street, parallel with the wooded Hanger, is much like any other English village, till you come almost to its end, and there it opens into a little quiet cobbled square, at the top corner of which stands the church. By the porch still flourishes the famous yew of monstrous proportions, and making that impression of indestructibility which no other bulk or strength in the world is able to make on the mind so powerfully as an old and mighty tree. Outside, the church is not notable, but inside it has preserved in rare measure that combined charm of antiquity, simplicity, and peace, which restorers have banished from too many of our old churches. It gives one less the sense of having been built than of having been carved out of the cool ancient rocks centuries ago. How still it is! What a sanctuary of silence! How luxurious a bed of death is here for the few favoured ones that one almost expects to hear

gently breathing in their sleep — so deep is the silence. The living lie down in no such pomp of quietness.

White's, you would think, is this bed of state, right in the centre of the chancel, which you must walk over if you would reach the altar-rail, and take the blessing of the place upon your knees.

GILBERTUS WHITE,
Obiit. 13 Feb., Anno Dni. 172⅞.
Ætatis Suæ 77.

A tablet on the wall adjoining will tell you much more in funeral Latin, florid with *issimus* and *issime*, yet not without grace. However, this is not our Gilbert White but his grandfather. Our Gilbert lies out in the church-yard, with the shyness of genius; characteristically it is his relations who ruffle it in the chancel. Several other Whites assist at their kinsman's honoured sleep. The bookseller of whom Cobbett spoke is here. He has given up his London business to share his brother Gilbert's immortality. Ben-

jamin was his name, and to the left of the altar is a pathetic tablet to his seventh son, James White, Captain-Lieutenant in the First Battalion of the 82nd Regiment of Infantry, who cannot be present in this family pantheon, for "he fell a victim to the Climate of Saint Domingo, in the 29th year of his age, and was buried in the Charbonnière at Port au Prince," of which place, let not after-times forget, he died Town Adjutant.

Near him is the tablet of another absentee, of a fate sadly similar, and the only stranger in this family party of congratulatory death. This is one Charles Burton Etty, son of two Ettys whose piety is set forth with much particularity. He "fell in an engagement with the Maroons in the Island of Jamaica. Aged 35 years." That was in the days when the word "maroon" became for a while something more than a half-forgotten verb occasionally used in sea stories.

So does one little chancel keep the names of two of those builders of our

empire, who have been so many and so brave that their memories must be a private care; and so is this remotest of English villages directly joined with the ends of the earth, and directly concerned in a curious footnote of English colonial history.

I heard that two of the rooms of White's old house still survive as part of the handsome modern house which completes the side of the village street facing the church. But I made no attempt to see them. My curiosity was not great enough to overcome what is no doubt my singular aversion from invading the startled modern domesticities which usually make a hurried flight from the sacred rooms on these occasions. With an entirely unknown family at lunch, it is difficult not to hasten over one's sentiment, and ever afterwards to recall that family rather than the shrine you came to visit. I own to a considerable sympathy with the Rev. Francis Gastrell, of New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, in this particular, monstrous

though his remedy was. When the first thrill of living in some haunted house of genius is past, that other haunting of the sentimental pilgrim must at times wear heavily upon the nerves. Perhaps your son has just come home from the wars, or your wife that very instant presented you with another girl, when in comes the housemaid with a "Please, sir, there's a gentleman wishes to see the bed in which Queen Elizabeth slept!" You are hardly human if you don't exclaim: "Queen Elizabeth be ——!"

Therefore, if there was anything so interesting as I have mentioned going on in Gilbert White's house the day of my visit to Selborne, it proceeded to a conclusion uninterrupted by me. The inn, however, I did visit, for it was then past noon, and some bread and cheese and beer seemed a fitting preparation for climbing the Hanger. In the inn parlour I saw two things that interested me: a newspaper and a stuffed bird. Of the newspaper I will speak again. For the

moment I solicit your kind interest in the bird. From memories of prints of him I had seen, I judged him to be a particular favourite of mine, to get a good look at whom I have often crawled stealthily through the heather at twilight, and lain as still as a stone near some blasted pine such as he loves to choose for his perch. So have I been rewarded by clear-cut silhouettes of him against the sky. I have seen the flies disappear into his curious hairy beak, and I have caught him in other characteristic moments. Best of all, my ears have been within a yard or two of the very source of that strange bass voice, welling out into the listening moorland silence at evening with a hoarse passionate churring rattle which seems the very soul of the pine-woods rudely articulate. "Dumb woods, have ye uttered a bird?"

Yes, I surmised that at last I saw my old friend the nightjar face to face. But to make quite sure I asked the innkeeper. Now the innkeeper was a countryman.

So, you see, he did n't know. As the bird is the typical bird of the heather and pine country in which the innkeeper has been born and bred — as typical as the sparrow is typical of London — was it to be expected of him that he should know? The bird had been there along with the beer-pumps and the rest of the fixtures when he took over the place. So began and ended his information on the subject. However, I had n't any real doubt as to the identity of the bird. He was as surely a nightjar as the beer-pump was a beer-pump; and I studied him long and reverently, as one studies the features of a poet whose voice we have so often heard, but whose face one sees for the first time.

And the image is no image, but the precise fact of the matter. For the nightjar is a very great poet, and when a man gets the mysterious, yearning melancholy of the evening earth, the ache of it, the brackeny smell of it, the moths flitting, the dew rising, the shadows massing, the

stars tinkling out, the moon somewhere —when a man gets these things into words as the nightjar gets them into his one note, a note which, though one, is saved from monotony by a masterly modulation and a subtle expansion and retraction of its volume; when a man does that, and further charges the whole with the sense of a hopeless eternally patient passion, then we may call him a poet indeed.

Elsewhere I have compared the nightjar to Browning and the nightingale to Tennyson, and the comparison is so far true that we may allow it to illustrate the relative unpopularity of the nightjar. He is seldom mentioned in poetry. Indeed, almost all the important references to him are to be found in the writings of Mr. George Meredith. It was the nightjar, not the nightingale, I like to think, that was in the wood that holy night with Lucy and Richard; and the nightjar is the chosen bird of "Love in the Valley." By these tokens he is a bird with a grow-

ing reputation. He is what we mean when we say "modern." He is the bird of a generation that demands the sincere voice, the *cri de cœur*, however rugged that voice may be; a generation weary of the roulades of the professional nightingale.

But, Heavens! how ugly he is! No bird for courts is this. He is the hump-backed musician. Heaven help the lady who falls in love with him for his music before she has seen his face. All that is at once uncouth and strong seems to have come together to make this stubborn, broad-backed lump of a creature. He suggests some horrible composite rather than an honest species with respectable ancestors. The uncarved block of him, so to speak, is an owl, for he belongs to the owl family and has "fern-owl" for one of his names; but he suggests greater strength than an owl, and a more sinister predacity. There is something of the bull-dog about his thick-set brown back. He needs chest breadth to house that deep music.

But it is in his head and eyes that his strangeness centres. His head, with the broad pointed beak open, horrid hairs sticking out at each side, like the tentacles of a barbel, rather suggests a fish than a bird, and there is something in it too, coming perhaps of the large, disproportionate, and somewhat wild, eyes, which suggests the lolling head of an idiot. The bird was meant for one of nature's monsters — but some accident has made him a genius. And with all this goes the pathos of very ugly things.

There are three recognised ways of climbing the Hanger. Of course, at any point you can take the brief Roman way with hills and go perpendicularly on — perhaps always the best way with hills — for at no point, so far as I could see, is Selborne Hanger unscaleable. However, you will probably find any one of the three ways I have referred to sufficiently Roman for your taste. The first one catches sight of on entering the village, not immediately taking its meaning maybe; for up through

the thick beech-wood that *hangs* (hence the name) on the steep wall of hill, an avenue has been cut, and up this zig-zags a gravel path, looking at the distance like a gigantic herring-bone. It has evidently been made with an eye to a rude decorative effect, and ends at the top with a full-stop in the shape of a wishing-stone. You lay one hand on the stone, one on your heart, and look the way your love lies. Having no compass with me, I was unable to "wish," and to turn North, South, East, and West would smack of levity.

The two other paths lead up through the singularly beautiful beech-wood, one diagonally and coming out at the far end of the Hanger overlooking the church and White's house, and the other striking the summit about midway. This middle course was my own choice, and I found it sufficiently ambitious.

What is the secret of that romantic fairy-tale effect which beeches, and I think no other trees, make upon the imagination — particularly young beeches slim

and very tall? Such woods are seen in their perfection of romantic suggestiveness in Denmark, and this wood at Selborne reminded me rather of Hans Andersen than Gilbert White. Perhaps the effect arises partly from the fact that the trunks are entirely devoid of foliage and branches, and sweep up, like the columns of a hall, to support the thick roof of green leaves. Thus you can see from end to end of the wood, but in a perpetual enchanted twilight. Then there is usually a fascinating but absolutely uniform lean in the columns, and this repetition of exactly the same lines, as in a decorative pattern, has no doubt its share in impressing the imagination.

In almost startling contrast to the haunted gloom of the beech-wood, is the plateau of sun and grass and oaks and breeze on to which you step from your climb. You stand in the centre of a vast circle of hilly horizons, the wealds and fields of Sussex and Surrey and I know not what other counties, stretched

almost too map-like at your feet. Perhaps the chief surprise of the place is in the character of the green wilderness which flourishes on this broad back of hill. One does not expect to be so high in the air, and yet so hidden in greenery. It is a stretch of oak-openings lifted bodily into the air, with green dingles, and bramble coverts, and bright little chapels of the wild-rose:

"Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the noonday fire,—
Wild-wood privacies, closets of lone desire,
Chamber from chamber parted with wavering arras of leaves."

And the oaks are old and strong and mossy, and full of green darkness. Cows go tinkling about hidden among the bushes, and two little boys carrying sticks on their backs suddenly appear like gnomes out of the depths of the green twilight. It is Broceliande, and yet you are high on a hilltop, where, scripturally speaking, you cannot be hid, all the time.

Presently, with something of a start you

come upon a cottage at the edge of the hill. A loutish young countryman stood near as I came upon it. I asked him if he could tell me which of yonder hills was Hindhead. No, he could n't. Could he tell me the names of any of the hills lying about us? No, not one — not even the name of the next hanger. I could barely conceal my contempt for this third exhibition of country ignorance. But presently his dull face brightened with a certain intelligence, and he asked a question: Had I seen a pig thereabouts?

I had n't — so we parted, mutually disgusted with each other. He had never heard of Hindhead, and I had n't seen his pig. Of what use were we to each other? So we parted without salutation or regret, and I wandered along the Hanger, to make my way down again by the descent at the village end. In the park-like stretch which runs between the village street and the foot of the Hanger, a number of young people were making themselves happily hot a-hay-making — of

all romantic occupations perhaps the most laborious. But who grudges any labour that brings him close to the good earth? — except perhaps sexton's work. Any excuse to be near the warm heart of the mighty Mother: hay-making, playing at soldiers in Woolmer forest, writing books about nothing — anything at all, anything at all.

CHAPTER II

TO STRATFORD-ON-AVON, TO SEE SARAH BERNHARDT

Thunder and Oxford — Warwick and public spirit — Stratford Forget-me-nots — Romance incarnate — Stratford Love-sick — The Red Horse and Washington Irving.

"TO travel hopefully is better than to arrive." That depends. When one's journey is to Stratford-on-Avon to see Sarah Bernhardt play "Hamlet," I think the advantage is with arriving; particularly if there has seemed a conspiracy on the part of storm and tempest, to make one's travelling anything but hopeful. In my last chapter I made a reference to a newspaper seen at the inn, a reference I promised to explain. The explanation is simple. It was owing to a chance-seen announcement in that newspaper that there, amid the very Eng-

lish natural history and antiquities of Selborne, my thoughts were suddenly summoned from nightjars and haymakers and cool chancels by the magic call of the most romantic name in all romantic France. Madame Sarah Bernhardt, the announcement ran, proposed to play "Hamlet" at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, on the afternoon of Thursday, June 29, 1899. Here was a chance of a life-time. The Garrick Jubilee seemed to be a trivial occasion compared with this, — the incongruous attempt of an artificial unpoetic age to do urban homage to the wildest and sweetest of all romantic poets. And, again, when one thinks of the second-rate players to whom the picturesque little theatre by Avon-side is for the most part profanely given up: here, indeed, was the beautiful thing happening at last.

For those who see only the superficial contrasts between nationalities, and miss the human correspondences, the occasion was, I suppose, one of mere curiosity, con-

trast, incongruity indeed. However, I proposed to be present because the occasion to my thinking promised, on the contrary, to be one of unusual harmony. It was not so much to see Madame Bernhardt play "Hamlet" that I was going — but just to enjoy the dramatic harmony of her mere presence in a place which, however English in its natural beauty, is no longer of any country, but that of the imagination; such is the charmed atmosphere with which Shakespeare has saturated it, as a lane is filled with the scent of honeysuckle, or a wood is filled with the singing of a bird.

I had hoped to do the journeying for myself — and I suppose the half-childish delight of such independent road-travel is a part of the general charm which belongs to any traffic with the earth. Besides, for such an experience as I proposed a day or two amid the quiet and freshness of the open air is a lustral preparation peculiarly fit, bracing and sweetening the mind, and renewing the eager-

ness of the senses. After a day in the country the mind is no less keen for food than the body — and a book has never such good fortune with one as in the after-dinner hour at an inn. However, unexpected rain is a sore destroyer of human hopes, and, though I had returned to the valley and Persephone in a great glory of sunset, that red sky at night was no true shepherd's delight, for the morning-star came in with skies of very variable temper, and a barometer evidently determined on making a radical change. Heavy showers, and ragged trailing clouds, kept me hesitating till afternoon, when a bright interval tempted me to make a dash for Guildford. As I neared Godalming, a thunderstorm was passing from south to north like an emperor, and, with the downpour that accompanied it, I began to ponder on trains as far as Oxford, where, indeed, I arrived in that cowardly fashion about midnight. Oxford had had its weather troubles too, for its streets rippled with mud beneath my wheels, as I sought

the Clarendon, where presently I fell asleep to the music of ancient bells. As I left that learned city by seven of the morning sun, I should have to draw on other visits, were I to attempt superfluous addition to the literature in praise of that beautiful mother. I will but humbly record a sigh that I could not call her mine.

The morning seemed insincerely bright, flashing and glittering with those siren smiles which often lure the unwary traveller on to ambuscades of rain and wind. However, I managed to escape those footpads as far as Banbury, noting little by the way but the morning freshness, the breeze laying a silken hand across the barley, the fatness and towering umbrageousness of the green midland levels. No doubt I should be ready with impressions much more elaborate for those twenty-one miles, but the truth is that the more one enjoys this road-faring, the more primitive are our impressions, the less interrupted by the minutiæ of technical observation. Had

I been a farmer, or a political economist, or a botanist I would have been able to supply the reader with much data, for which, as he is probably no more a farmer, a political economist, or a botanist than I am, he could have no possible use. My observations could be of no value to the specialist, and they would only encourage the general reader in his bad habit of half-acquiring useless information. To look at a country-side from any such special point of view is like reading Shakespeare through the spectacles of the philologist. One is inclined to wonder sometimes that country-folk have such dull eyes for the beauty of nature. Yet it is clearly because their manner of livelihood compels them to lose the general effect in their concern with momentous particulars. They must be thinking of composts and drainage, of stock and crops. They are the anxious stage carpenters of this fair scene which we are privileged to contemplate with æsthetic irresponsibility. No few of the effects which charm our eyes and stir our imagi-

nations are ruin to the farmer, pessimism to the economist, and common greenstuff to the botanist, intent, with a lover's preoccupation, on the one rare species he is for the moment pursuing. To these the wind on the heath and the sun on the meadow are frivolities, and to fall in a dream at the sound of a brook over the stones is an unbusinesslike waste of time.

Alas! beauty is no one's business except his who can succeed at no other. Yet there are exceptional cases where a whole unæsthetic community is commercially interested in preserving a beautiful thing. Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon are two cases in point, and well, for the most part, have the burgesses of those towns understood on which side their bread is buttered. In these towns public spirit is privileged to be a branch of taste. In more modern towns, public spirit is shown for the most part by an energetic determination to make one's native place as hideous as possible, by steam-trams, over-head railways, and bad statues. All that makes for bustle

and clangour and ugliness will be the care of the man who in a modern town hopes in due course to grin through the golden horse-collar of mayoralty.

In Warwick, on the contrary, your public-spirited man knows that it is to the civic interest that the town be kept as quiet as a museum, that its sense of "ancient peace" is precious as a Grecian vase, and that its present and future depend entirely on the preservation of its past. In Warwick, therefore, the man who has had the bad civic energy to run a tram-car to within a few yards of the beautiful Leycester's Hospital is not to be rewarded with that gratitude which might rightly be his in another town. Rather he should be marked as a dangerous civic enemy, and be condemned to tear up his tram-lines with his own hands.

No vehicle later than the most antique form of omnibus should be allowed in Warwick, where speed is surely an unknown and undesirable necessity. That the railway was ever allowed to approach

such a perfect place is no doubt but another of those crimes against beauty which we owe to the fearful fifties — though this consideration, I must confess, had not prevented my gratefully catching the 9.15 from Banbury to Warwick under threat, once more, of thunderstorm.

It proved a false alarm — so I was able to take the road again at Warwick and travel for myself the eight pleasant miles to Stratford in a duly meditative frame of mind.

Stratford is one of those rare places of pilgrimage whose charm increases the oftener we visit them. Its freshness seems to grow with familiarity. And no doubt the simple reason is that it is mainly a shrine of nature's making. A stone monument begins to age from the moment we set it up. Soon it cracks and crumbles and mildews, subject to the contempt of the elements and the forgetfulness of man. But whoso would honour his dead, let him plant a young tree upon the grave, and thus will the memory of

the sleeper literally grow greener each spring. How wise was Omar, who committed his immortality to the keeping of a rose-bush, and thus bound up his name with the eternal energies of nature. A chapel to his memory, however richly dowered, would have fallen into decay, idle priests would have forgotten the prayers for which they were paid; but Omar knew that the rose-bush would never forget, and that with each punctual spring the west wind would swing that censer of perfumed petals above his sleep.

So with the green monument of Shakespeare. Let antiquarianism do what it will with that unanimated bust, let one bad commentator whitewash and another bad commentator colour, yea! whoso has the courage let him stir the thunder of those curse-protected bones—it matters little, for the real monument is outside, beyond their reach. If a window be open in the church, you can hear it flowing and rippling and rustling for many a green mile—his river,

the river he sowed with eternal forget-me-nots. The people of Stratford are good priests. They do not forget the services to the great dead in whose green temple they are all more or less directly servants. The humblest shopkeeper is proudly conscious that he keeps his shop in Shakespeare's town, while the innkeepers regard themselves as veritable high-priests of this mystery which so many cross the Atlantic, and so few cross England, to revere.

There are many forget-me-nots on Avon-banks, and those who, like the present writer, have been to Stratford many times, will find that the kind commemorative river takes no less care of some private ones of their own sowing. As we all have fancies for the disposal of our dust — some that it should be blown upon the winds, some that it should become part of the bitter-sweetness of the sea, some that it should share the simple fate of the grass — so one finds oneself apt to make Stratford the home of one's most precious memories, as one hangs a tattered flag in

Shakespeare's House.

a cathedral, or places an urn in some country chancel. Your little private memory craves shelter beneath the mighty dome of a public immortality. So one goes to Stratford year by year, not only for Shakespeare's sake, but to look at our own forget-me-nots.

Such a memory within a memory is Washington Irving's private chapel at the Red Horse Inn. The fame of Dickens needs not even the assistance of Shakespeare — yet I am sure his shade rejoices to know that every time Mrs. Baker shows the proudest pages in the book of visitors at Ann Hathaway's cottage, she always shows with especial pride the signature of Charles Dickens — and explains, in oft-repeated legend, how it comes to be robbed of its customary flamboyance. There was very little ink in the pot the day Dickens sat by the well in the garden and wrote his name, and the pen was very bad. That is the reason — and Mrs. Baker, herself actual Shakespearian archæology, always tells the story in a way that makes

you hear that pen scratching to this day, though the ink has dried this many a year.

Then, too, the fairest of American Perditas, untimely withdrawn from our worship to a little village in the Cotswolds, has left her signature like dropped flowers, in the several visitors' books within the sacred radius. It was once the pilgrimage of a summer's afternoon to follow her from visitors' book to visitors' book, so close to her actual presence as to be but some six signatures behind — yet, alas! never catching her up. "The air was bright with her past presence yet," but she herself had gone. By hers all that afternoon ran, too, the beautiful signature of William Winter, who will some day be remembered, less because he was once the first dramatic critic in America, as because he loved our Stratford so well. But, as not even a flutter of the goddess's robe rewarded me that afternoon, not even did I catch a glimpse of Mr. Winter's coat-tails.

Ah, well, I was to be more fortunate at a later day — and the eyes that have seen Sarah Bernhardt stepping into her carriage outside the Memorial Theatre are not likely to dwell upon lost opportunities. Happy privileged eyes! Years hence when you are closed for ever, when you are eyes no longer, but merely a pinch of forgotten dust, other eyes still brimming with the miracle of eager sight will long to have seen that — as till to-day you longed to have seen Cleopatra step into her golden barge — but long for that no more — eyes that have seen an equal marvel.

As I waited with the crowd, literally holding its breath, for her exit from the theatre, I heard one or two dull people discussing her "Hamlet" as dull folk must, discussing the French text, and the individual players. But most of us cared little to do that. It had been, as it could not fail to be, interesting, personal, intellectual, and in parts electric, but I am sure that all in that crowd felt the real moment of the afternoon was to be that which we

were breathlessly awaiting — the moment of her stepping out into the sunlight in the magnificent part of herself.

There is something very pathetic in the worship of a crowd. It is so hopelessly remote, in the individual unit, from its idol, and yet so personally passionate; so sure, it would seem, is each single beating heart, each single pair of eyes, that the idol is conscious of its single adoration. No man ever saw a great actress play without a certain absurd unconscious feeling that she is playing for him; while at the same time he knows well enough that the love of an individual wave for the moon is not more hopeless.

Of a sudden the wonder was enacting. She had bloomed in the doorway, half orchid and half queen. The moment had come, and already one's heart sank to realise that in a breath it would be gone. There was the moment historic before our eyes. How they hung upon it, hoped that it might pause in its passage, that the lens of the soul — to use a mechanical

image — might be granted such an "exposure" that the picture should remain upon it vivid for ever in all its parts.

Yes, once long ago men and women had watched Cleopatra like that. So crowds had looked upon Napoleon.

To-day we gazed, with that exaltation of the soul in the spectacle of any greatness, at the strange beauty, the imperious distinction, the siren charm, of Sarah Bernhardt.

There she was, already a legend, yet still a woman, smiling on white-headed mayors in golden horse-collars, so pleased with her flowers, so smart in her slim Paris gown, — a woman, a legend; Romance made visible; all the sorceries of nature and art — and France — incarnate. And there for her background was the willowed Avon flashing in the sun, and everywhere the thought of Shakespeare filling the air like spices. A dazzle in the eyes, a tumult in the heart — and she is gone; and so bright had been that dazzle, so wild that tumult even in the hearts of

women, that when — remembering Persephone's interest in such matters — I asked some ladies standing near to tell me, in set feminine terms, how the wonder had been clothed, not one of them could tell. "We could see nothing but her face!" they all exclaimed, and evidently looked upon me as a materialistic person, unworthy of the vision. It is seldom women pay a tribute such as that.

Well, eyes, you have seen, and you will never forget. Aching eyes that long to behold the vision again, already doubt that it was real. Alas! for the beauty that makes the heart lonely. But here is the river for companion. It is lonely, too, and the sunset is lonely. Stratford seems love-sick. Let us float up the lonely river and plant forget-me-nots, till starlight.

. . . . . .

I have planted the forget-me-nots, and I am sitting in Washington Irving's parlour near the day's end, dreaming over again the day. The landlady has been

very kind to me, allowing me to have the room all to myself for the evening. So I fasten the door with the little brass catch, and turn to enjoy my little kingdom of sentiment, with an even greater sense of privileged possession than that which Washington Irving writes of feeling as he drew up the arm-chair like a throne, and brandished the poker like a sceptre — monarch of an inn fireside. Greater than his, of course, because a man may not participate in the posthumous associations of himself, — though it is true that certain demi-gods of art, such as Goethe, have sat in their arm-chairs with a mien suggesting that the chair already belongs to the national museum. Irving's arm-chair is here in a glass case, under lock and key, on one side of the chimney piece — the poker, too. There is room for another glass case on the other side. But I must be careful and eschew laziness — it is hardly big enough to hold a sofa.

Portraits of Irving — a handsome fellow with a stock and a fine head of hair — and

a framed page or two of his handwriting, hang on the walls, accompanied by a great cloud of great actors; Garrick leaning against Shakespeare's bust, as Shakespeare leans upon his own greatness in Leicester-square; Booth — "Mr. Booth," as they touchingly speak of him in his old house, now the Players' Club, in New York, just as though he were still in his room upstairs — and many others.

A copy of "The Sketch Book" is on the table. It is, I imagine, little read out of Stratford to-day, sharing thus the general fate of minor classics; but you have only to open it anywhere to find that it is still alive with the deathless charm of humanity, not to speak of a style, which, if sometimes too neatly Addisonian, is at its best full of a fine ease. I find the paper on Stratford. How good it is! Even Lamb himself could hardly have twined together the various traditions and impressions of the place into a prettier wreath of sentiment. I will transcribe the opening passage that the reader may

the better be able to realise what I am feeling and saying:—

"To a homeless man who has no spot on this wide world which he can truly call his own, there is a momentary feeling of something like independence and territorial consequence, when, after a weary day's travel, he kicks off his boots, thrusts his feet into slippers, and stretches himself before an inn fire. Let the world without go as it may; let kingdoms rise or fall, so long as he has the wherewithal to pay his bill, he is, for the time being, the very monarch of all he surveys. The arm-chair is his throne; the poker his sceptre, and the little parlour of some twelve feet square his undisputed empire. It is a morsel of certainty, snatched from the midst of the uncertainties of life; it is a sunny moment gleaming out kindly on a cloudy day; and he who has advanced some way on the pilgrimage of existence knows the importance of husbanding even morsels and moments of enjoyment. 'Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn?' thought I, as I gave the fire a stir, lolled back in my elbow chair, and cast a complaisant look about the little parlour of the Red Horse, at Stratford-on-Avon.

"The words of sweet Shakespeare were just passing through my mind, as the clock struck midnight from the tower of the church in which he lies buried. There was a gentle tap at the door, and a pretty chambermaid, putting in her smiling face, inquired with a hesitating air whether I had rung. I understood it as a modest hint that it was time to retire. My dream of absolute dominion was at an end: so abdicating my throne, like a prudent potentate, to avoid being deposed, and putting the Stratford Guide Book under my arm as a pillow companion, I went to bed, and dreamt all night of Shakespeare, the Jubilee, and David Garrick."

I suppose M. Huysmans, and such virtuosi of the one inevitable word, would think small beer of such writing. Ah well! time will show! — show again no doubt as it has so often shown, that survival in literature depends on no one quality — not on the *mot juste*, or on "distinction," or on style alone, but that indeed a kind heart may be as important as any of these, so awe-inspiring in the mouths of certain modern writers who confuse

"distinction" with hauteur, and style with stiffness and affectation.

Besides, as one turns over this "Sketch Book" again, one is reminded that not only was Irving a graceful essayist, but a creator of at least one large and lasting figure of the fantastic imagination, and of at least one national type. Of course, I refer to personages no less famous than Rip Van Winkle, and that Diedrich Knickerbocker, after whom the "best" New York families are proud to call themselves. Besides, Bracebridge Hall and Sleepy Hollow are haunts of the fancy hardly less familiar in our thoughts than Hampton Court or Richmond Park. Oh, yes, Irving belongs to the Beginners, the makers of new realities and new words. But, perhaps, best of all, he was that rare and unfashionable apparition in contemporary literature — a charming nature.

I have spent a long while dipping about his "Sketch Book," making quick and warm re-acquaintance with old friends. It must be near midnight, and I half ex-

pect that pretty chambermaid to put in her smiling admonitory face. And shall I dream of Shakespeare, the Jubilee, and David Garrick? Perhaps — but I confess I hope not. "No, good mother, here's metal more attractive."

CHAPTER III

LISTENING TO THE RAIN AT EVESHAM

On certain lovers of rain — The horrors of a middle Victorian coffee room — A respectable Autolycus — Drunken Bideford — Abbot's Salford — Bread and honey.

I AM at Evesham engaged in listening to the rain, which at last there is no escaping; and, like Melisande, I am not happy. In fact, I am in one of those moods of vicious disappointment, which are apt to make one's observation of exterior things a little unreliable. I know, of course, that rain is a very beautiful thing, and that I ought to be grateful for this unique opportunity of studying it. Why cannot I watch its fall in the spirit of the lady essayist, who, in a very ecstasy of observation, bids us realise that "the rods that thinly stripe our landscape" are "infinitely separate, units, an innumerable

flight of single things, and the simple movement of intricate points."

Or why cannot I rejoice in that thorough southwest soaking-to-the-skin, our capacity for enjoying which is one of Mr. Meredith's tests of the true nature lover. It will be seen that I am trying to recall all the beautiful things about rain within reach of my memory, for I would like to be happy if I could. Of course, I think of Verlaine, and I think too of a young poet who writes, —

> "O! do you hear the rain
> Beat on the glass in vain?
> So my tears beat against Fate's feet
> In vain — in vain — in vain."

But mostly I think of the rain as Verhaeren somewhat grotesquely celebrates it in images of weariness and hopelessness. Disrespectfully translating him, I exclaim: "O! the rain; the long rain, the long, long rain; the very long rain — the rain!"

At reasonable times I can be as grateful for

the rain as though I were a flower — or a farmer. I believe that I could write poetry to the rain — if it would only stop; though I admit to many an occasion when during the falling of rain my brain has been mysteriously freshened, like any other handful of earth, and when the mere sound of the rain at the window or on the roof has set up a rhythm in my mind, and loosened the unwilling words. But that was at home — where rain has a way of being a soothing, protecting creature, where we are driven inwards upon the happiness we are apt sometimes to forget in the days that sing us out into the sun, and where we are often grateful to the rain for so prosaic a reason as its comforting message: "No one will call to-day — Rain keeps them all away — Best friends sit safe indoors — Safe for one day from bores." Rain at home is one thing — but rain away from home is quite another. Away from home it is the most homeless thing in the world. Far from enhancing, it depreciates the most genial interior, and

disintegrates, with its eternal drip-drip, its "innumerable flight of single things," its "simple movement of intricate points" — such small happiness as we may possess.

This evening, though a train would easily bring me before midnight to friendship that would extravagantly disprove such fancies, the rain has the power to make me feel utterly desolate and forsaken, lost beyond reach of those who love me —

> "Beyond the reach of weeping,
> Beyond the reach of hands."

I feel sure that I shall never again see a face I love or clasp a friendly hand. I am hermetically sealed within a stale coffee room, and I am condemned to sit and look at that portrait of the Prince Consort for all eternity — with the alternative of occasionally turning to a mysterious engine of pleasure found in many country inns, called, I believe, a stereoscope. A table is mournfully lit-

tered with double photographs, which I believe are occasionally slid into the instrument and looked at. They seem to be photographs of every conceivable thing I was born entirely without the desire to see. A stereoscope! Was any human being ever really amused by that sad device? I suppose it was the phonograph of 1851.

If you want to know what it is really to hate that much-abused year, to hate it from real experience, you should make a tour of country inns; for to-night, at all events, I am inclined to the opinion that the "mine ease at mine inn" sentiment is a sad fraud. How is it possible to take one's ease at an inn which seems to be a limbo of forgotten furniture and unforgiven steel-engravings? Washington Irving, and essayists of his period, were in a position to talk prettily about the old English inn, for they knew it, for the most part, before it had been refurnished and re-pictured in accordance with middle-Victorian taste. They knew nothing of

that later scourge, the German oleograph. Of course, there are no few inns in England that have entirely escaped violation. Such an inn is the Red Horse, Stratford, where only last night I was so happy and home-like, and where — Would to Heaven I had remained! In such inns the indigenous good taste of our old England that carved the old chairs and panelled the old rooms, and filled old bowls with old-fashioned flowers, still survives; the taste that, innocent of æsthetic philosophies, understood the beauty of simple effects of shape and colour, hated mere gaudy display, and has imposed a certain homely tradition of seemliness even upon those who minister to the quite physical needs of life: the seemliness of clean-swept stables, of sweet-smelling dairies, of cream sold in certain jars and raspberries in certain baskets, of dishes served in one fair way and no other.

From the inn, however, in which I am this evening drearily incarcerated, such taste has long since fled. It is picturesque

enough on the outside, possessing indeed part of one of those inn-yard galleries from which the quality were accustomed to watch the young Elizabethan drama. But its picturesque outside only accentuates the horrors of its inside. So far as those insignificant matters, comfort, cleanliness and cooking, are concerned, it is, I am bound to admit, satisfactory — though I must qualify the word "comfort;" for surely comfort means something more than clean sheets and armchairs. One's dinner may be excellent, the chair which we draw up to it luxurious, but how is it possible to enjoy either, with a portrait of the Prince Consort on one wall, "Dignity and Impudence" on another, and a German print on a third?

During dinner I vainly strove to screw my courage to ringing up the proprietor and making some such speech as this: "My dear sir, the dinner you have provided for me is delightful. The roast duck is a dream of culinary loveliness.

The peas are as green — as a meadow by Chaucer. The potatoes must have been boiled to music, and I foresee that the gooseberry tart was made in heaven. My congratulations, my thanks, are sincere, and yet — what are all these things to me? How can I enjoy them in a room which, while it thus ministers to one of my senses, so cruelly violates another? How is it possible to enjoy your dinner when suffering so acutely from your pictures? Will you, therefore, have the kindness to remove the portrait of the Prince Consort from that wall, 'Dignity and Impudence' from that, and *that* from that!"

"Also," I might have added, "there are two pictures in my bedroom which must either make sleep impossible, or fill it with distressing nightmares such as I hesitate to face. The pictures are called 'The First Sacrament' and 'The Last Sacrament.' The one represents a young surpliced clergyman in the act of baptising an infant, while the mother in a crinoline,

and the father in military uniform and dated by mutton-chop whiskers, press close to a font designed in the most distressing taste, other and earlier children in 'steps and stairs' about them. The second picture represents a bald-headed old gentleman lying on his back in bed, and evidently at the point of death. A middle-aged surpliced clergyman bends over him administering the sacred wafer, and the crinoline and the mutton-chop whiskers and the nice little white-stockinged grandchildren are there. This picture faces the end of my bed, and whenever I wake in the night, is there with its gruesome reminder — of the most horrible period of English taste. You cannot, I am sure, think me unreasonable in desiring the temporary removal of these pictures also."

. . . . . .

But, no doubt, I have done enough grumbling. Is there nothing pleasant to record of the day? Actually this complaint is concerned only with the dreary

close of a fair day, and is thus a piece of ingratitude. For, indeed, up till five o'clock the day has been like a book full of green leaves, emblazoned with sunbeams. And I have had the Avon for companion a great part of the way hither from Stratford. It is here once more in a broad, stone-bridged stream beneath my window, and in spite of the rain a merry-go-round is in full blast upon its green marge. It is delighting Evesham with Miss Julie Mackey's "A Little Bit of Orange Peel," and, like a drunken man with a tune in his head, it goes on repeating it over and over again with fatuous absorption.

That reminds me that my way hither ran through "Drunken Bideford," sign posts to the right and left of the road pointing off to "Haunted Hillbro'" and the other villages associated with the legend of Shakespeare's fatal drinking match. I suppose I must have passed the site of the crab-apple tree somewhere on the way. At Bideford, respecting the

customs of the place, I dismounted at one of the inns which garnish the long time-worn street, irregular as a toper's walk. Inside a broad-faced, jovial-looking pedlar sat enjoying the cool shade of the bar and a long pint of ale, a basket of robust woollen stockings by his side. It was his horse and trap standing at the door, for he was a very respectable and prosperous Autolycus.

"They used to call this drunken Bideford?" I said, by way of being conversational.

"That's about it, sir," he answered, with a slow twinkle; and I found presently that that was his formula of answer to any question whatsoever.

"That's about it, and it still lives up to the old name. These old places don't change much."

"But I suppose it's no more drunken than its neighbours," said I; "no more drunken than Hillbro' is haunted? Most country villages seem rather thirsty places, judging by the number of inns. I sup-

pose a village is like the rest of us. Give it a bad name — and it lives up to it."

"That's about it, sir."

"I suppose you go a good round on your journeys," I said presently, glancing at his basket.

Autolycus nodded.

"About how far?"

"Could hardly say," he answered, as though the question had never before occurred to him.

"A hundred miles?"

"That's about it," he answered, relieved from the burden of calculation.

"Round Leicester?" I hazarded.

"That's about it."

"Stockings hand-knitted?"

No, his daughters made them on stocking machines in Leicester, and he went out with them into the green lanes of Warwickshire, the hosier of many a country dance. I imagined his daughters pretty mistresses of the loom, though this I knew was a conscious illusion of the fancy, for country girls are only pretty in picture

books — and the whole scheme seemed a charming primitive scheme of life.

Now, if there were only the same demand for books as for stockings, what an ideal life it would be to travel the country with a horse and trap selling one's own poems — troubadour and publisher in one. One's wife and daughters might do the printing and binding at home, and even, as machinery advances, weave the poetry on the new poetry looms; thus leaving to oneself the only process really demanding skill, — that of selling it.

Some way out of Bideford, the road steals by a lovely old seventeenth century house, all mullions and old dreams, with a little belfry up among its many gables. Here I alighted, and, passing through an old gate-house, found myself in a long courtyard leading directly to a porch, over which is carved, "*1662. Moderata Durant*" — excellent advice to the passing cyclist. A ruddy farm girl answered my ring, and I found that the old place is not unaccustomed to being looked at;

indeed, quite expecting it, it charges sixpence for the privilege. It likewise sells you honey in the honeycomb. For it is now a farm, though once long ago it was a nunnery and it still keeps up a little chapel for the benefit of devout Catholics in the neighbourhood — its owner belonging to the true faith. I followed my quite intelligent little guide through the various rooms. Two of them are beautifully panelled, though the panelling has been barbarously painted over, and these are inhabited by several old family portraits which seemed rather to resent my modern intrusion, hanging aloof and Elizabethan. Along the whole length of the top floor, the garrets of the house, runs an enormous room, once the dormitory, but now filled only with light from the many skylights. What a place for keeping apples in! But what an orchard you would need to fill it!

The curiosity of the house is an ingenious priest's hiding place on one of the many landings. You open a small cupboard and reveal three or four innocent-

looking shelves; but if you loosen a hidden catch and push these shelves, they give way, swinging inwards on hinges at the top, and revealing underneath a little pit about a yard and a half square and about the same depth. When the shelves were in place, there would be room to stand up in, and listen through the chinks to the men-at-arms tapping for hollow wainscots through the house, and coming nearer every moment.

I asked about the old bell. Was it ever rung nowadays? Only when Mr. ——, the farmer, was in a distant field and was needed in a hurry. Then I bought some honey, and begged a slice or two of bread, for I was intent on a queen's meal by the roadside; and, thus provided, I said good-bye to Abbot's Salford.

Some way out of it I found a lonely corner of lane, and took out my bread and honey. As I sat eating, a few critics waddled past me, following each other in line as they always do, and hissing their usual recognition. I smiled at them, and

went on with my bread and honey — an ideal meal for the open air. Indeed, honey should always be eaten so. Eaten indoors at breakfast, it is robbed of its proper suggestiveness. Its wild earth-sweetness is gone. It has become as domesticated as marmalade. It is a caged lark among foods. But, by the roadside, eaten among the very flowers whence it was stolen, it is like milk from the cow. With the body of corn in the form of bread, and the spirit of corn in the form of a flask, what more should an earth-born man need? Nature blesses the meal and sends you all her musicians to make it merry, particularly grasshoppers. Grasshoppers and wild honey! It is a delicious meal!

Here is a song set to music by one of the grasshoppers: —

Of all the meals you can buy for money,
Give me a meal of bread and honey!

A table of grass in the open air,
A green bank for an easy chair,

AT EVESHAM

The table-cloth inwrought with flowers,
And a grasshopper clock to tick the hours,

Between the courses birds to sing
To many a hidden shining string,

And neither man nor maid be seen,
But a great company of green

Upon a hundred thousand stalks
Talk to us its great green talks.

And, when the merry meal is done,
To loiter westward with the sun,

Dipping fingers ere we go
In the stream that runs below.

Of all the meals you can buy for money,
Give me a meal of bread and honey!

CHAPTER IV

HINDHEAD TO WINCHESTER

Solitude and personality — In the bosom of the hills — The South Downs — The ride to Winchester — The beauty of Winchester — A learned verger — Wykehamist "notions."

I HAD planned to enter the Cotswolds from Evesham, and then to zig-zag my way south again, returning home by way of Salisbury and Winchester; but a rainy morning and a muddy street decided me to give in for a day or two and exactly reverse my plan. So I said good-bye to Evesham, without having given a thought to Simon de Montfort; and within a few hours was once more turning down home-lane, with a sense of having been away for years. So a few miles of space covered by one's own exertions seem to expand time also, and give to hours whose seconds have been

like as blades of grass the sense of excitting history.

Probably it is the loneliness, the rare opportunity of living to oneself, which accounts for this quickened sense of existence, during hours actually spent in an idleness extending even to one's tongue. To have journeyed with a friend would have materially plundered that feeling; for the success of a joint journey chiefly lies in the power of either companion courteously to be the other all the way along. One is never oneself, except either alone, or with a slave, or with an enemy. A courteously conducted existence leaves a man little opportunity of being himself. It is impolite, sometimes even cruel, to be oneself in society. That is why personalities cannot long exist there — and the same applies to all human intercourse. That is why men and women fear marriage — they are literally giving up themselves; for no good husband or father can be really himself. Of course, there is another side to the question: namely,

how much of what we call ourselves is not the habit of obligingly being someone else, and how much self we should have at all were it not for our making such formative habits. Perhaps the soul, like the body, is mainly an affair of clothes — clothes worn to please, and largely provided by others. Three or four days alone in the country will soon test this for you, and, after you have experimented a little in your own society, you will probably be a very great person indeed if you don't welcome a return to being several other more charming people instead — which is what we mean by "going home." Ah, yes! how much of such goodness and sweetness as we may possess does not come of our living with natures better and sweeter than ourselves!

However, I had hardly locked up my "self" in the wardrobe and been three other dear people for as many hours, when the sun came out and declared my flight from Evesham a cowardly business, in

fact a thinly veiled piece of homesickness. Fortunately, I can prove, if necessary, that rain really did fall at Evesham, though it seems to have fallen nowhere else, and Persephone denied a single drop in the valley.

There was nothing to do but to unlock the wardrobe again, and meet myself once more at the top of the lane. This I did reluctantly enough about tea-time, and, once more on the Portsmouth-road, once more having alighted to examine maps at Liphook, I took the turn to the left of the Anchor, seeking Winchester by way of Petersfield.

The country is largely Woolmer Forest again, rolling common and pine, the greater part of the way to Petersfield, a place lacking in that persuasiveness to which we cannot refuse a halt; but, beyond, it begins to swell and soften and dimple into the round grassy bosoms of the South Downs. Soon one sees that one's road is to lie in those pleasant places, literally in the bosom of the hills; and so

strikingly feminine are the contours that one grows almost shy as one approaches them, and, slowly ascending from the plain, is taken in among the soft shadows. "This earth of the beautiful breasts!"

Once on the uplands, one is soon conscious of a solitude peculiarly exquisite, and deepening with each mile that brings one nearer to Winchester. It is a solitude penetrated, one can hardly tell how, with a sense of antiquity, and that hush of reverence with which very old things seem to fill the air. The land itself seems older than the land in the plains, as the stones in a cathedral seem older than the parent stone in the quarry whence they were hewn. It is that ancient silence which seems to make the grass-grown barrow lonelier than the rest of the meadow, the loneliness of a country of ancient earthworks and Druid stones. Such a country, of course, it is, and when about eight miles beyond Petersfield, close by a scrap of village called Brookwood, the remains of an old stone circle arrest one at the

roadside, one feels that the land is beginning to explain itself. For we are now entering on a region where the names of Saxon kings are still on the lips of peasants, where the battlefields have been green for a thousand years, and the Norman Conquest is spoken of as elsewhere we speak of the French Revolution, — a comparatively recent convulsion of politics. Not by our small modern clocks is time measured here, but by the sundial of the stars.

I shall not soon forget the impressiveness of the last three or four miles to Winchester, dreamily ridden in a twilight of fine gold. How strangely spiritual this solid earth, of chalk and nibbling sheep, can sometimes seem; what an expression of diaphanousness it sometimes wears. So a poet's face, long since materialised, will sometimes at evening shine with a boyish starlight, and seem all spirit for a brief elated hour.

The beech-trees and the hedges which had somewhat disguised the lines of the

land hitherto, had suddenly disappeared, and there was nothing but the long-limbed down lying vast and still beneath the solemn evening sky. The silence seemed like an exquisite vessel of porcelain. One dared scarcely breathe lest it should break. How lonely it was, and yet how little one asked a companion. And there, crowned with an heraldic sunset, lay Winchester in a fold of the down; and, after the hush of those intense uplands, it was almost startling to come upon the sudden sound of the little river Itchen, running with noisy freshness beneath the bridge that is the threshold of the town, and to mingle once more in a warm murmur of men and women.

Well may the Wykehamist write of Winchester like a lover, and count it a fortune peculiarly fair to have been "a Wykehamist come of Wykehamists." Even to the stranger, sleeping but for one night in the odour of its sanctity, it may well seem that he has found no place so lovely, so beautiful to the eye, and so ap-

pealing to the soul, as this mitred, romantic city — this emblazoned initial letter of England's history. Was history ever written as it is written in the stones of Winchester, and what other English city has such a history to write? for there is scarce an event or personality that has been momentous for England that has not at one time touched Winchester — from King Canute to Jane Austen, both Wykehamists in death, for the bones of both rest in the cathedral.

Here, too, rest the bones of Izaak Walton. But you must ask to see his grave. Else the verger will pass it by, for vergers take small account of literary fame; and what, indeed, can such fame seem to a man in whose sight all day are those carved and gilded chests hoarding the dust of twenty forgotten kings? "In this tomb rests pious King Edred, who nobly governed this land of Britain and died A. D. 955," runs the inscription on one of those strange mortuary chests resting on the side screens of the choir; and

the guide-book writer adds in brackets: "Contains many thigh bones and two skulls." Now a verger realises that no literary man ever had many thigh bones and two skulls. That is only given to kings — and vergers throughout England are unanimously royalist. It is instructive to hear how they speak of Cromwell to this day. The vergers of England at least will never forgive him.

But I must not seem to be disrespectful to vergers, particularly to the courteous and learned verger at Winchester, who so generously and graciously gave me the benefit of historical and architectural acquirements which made me realise neglected opportunities of scholarship with a pang particularly keen. Only to hear him talk of "apsidal terminations"! He seemed only more familiar with William Rufus, who was carried in here from the New Forest, an arrow in his brain, and was buried in a tomb of basalt, "many looking on and few grieving." Yes, as he himself said of the reredos, peopled with the

statues of Wincastrian saints and heroes, my verger is a veritable "mass of history." You must go and let him tell you the story of Winchester Cathedral. Get him to tell you all I could never tell half so well, and respect with me, not only his learning, but the sentiment of his grateful pride that he has been chosen to be a doorkeeper in this beautiful house of God —and William of Wykeham.

Go, too, and ask to see the porter at Wykeham's noble school. The editor of "The Wykehamist" has not the honour and gracious glory of his school more in his heart. Ask him particularly to show you "the Seventh Chamber," where in an old room lit, so to say, with church windows, each scholar has his little alcoved desk, the books of his choice around him, and photographs of mother and sister and sweetheart to freshen his eyes and to keep pure his heart.

It may interest you, too, to go and see the name of the present editor of the "Times" boldly carved on the wainscot-

ting of the Sir Christopher Wren School-room. But I gathered that no such pleasure as that is being prepared for its successor by the present generation, for great men studying at Winchester no longer cut their names on the old oak. There has arisen, the porter told me, a "notion" that it is "bad form," and all the world knows that, as the porter said, "everything goes by 'notions' at Winchester School."

Some of these "notions" he told me, and some I learnt in glancing through a rare book kindly given me a glimpse of by a courteous book-seller — for Winchester "notions" are so old and odd as to have deserved collection in a book. From that book I gathered that Winchester boys talk no little Chaucer among themselves, say "swynke," for instance, to convey hard work. When a "man" — all males are, of course, "men" in Winchester, as in other public schools — is rather mean, or hard-up, you say he is "brum;" when he has plenty of money you say he is "bulky,"

which is a cause for him to "junket" — that is to say, congratulate himself. When he eats dumpling-puddings he refers to them as "fido." A fruit tart is "dean," and rice-pudding, I regret to say, is appropriately referred to as "muck." And, beyond this privileged language, the "notions" of the Winchester boy include an etiquette elaborate beyond the procedure of royal drawing-rooms. For example, no one save a "prefect" may wear his hat in crossing "Chamber Court," as only a "prefect" may walk along the central paved path — central "sands," I believe it is technically called — for an image of the Virgin, long since mouldered beyond recognition, is enshrined above the gateway, and only prefects may wear their hats in presence of the Virgin.

Life must be very arduous for the first few weeks of a Winchester boy's career. What terrible lickings must lie in wait for the uninitiated, and how terribly careful one must be to remember the "stalky" thing. "Stalky and Co."? Did the

porter know that? He smiled. Yes, indeed! Was there a boy in that school who did n't just worship Rudyard Kipling!

"Have you read 'The White Man's Burden'?" asked a lady with the beautiful white hair worn by Americans.

CHAPTER V

WINCHESTER TO SALISBURY

The river Itchen — Norman architecture — Keble and Richard Cromwell — Romsey church tower — A wind song — Salisbury Plain.

AFTER all, it is not difficult to understand the Winchester verger's comparative indifference to the quiet fame of a literary fisherman, for in Winchester the greatest names are dwarfed, not merely because of the crowned congregation of them, but because the history of Winchester is on so large a scale, was so broadly significant, that one thinks less of individuals than of races. For Winchester was the most important of those chess-boards on which the games between Briton and Roman, Roman-Briton and Saxon, Saxon and Norman, were played. The Itchen has more stirring memories written in its ripples than

trout caught by never so august a fisherman. It is no mere fishing stream, this little fighting river, for no doubt it ran with blood — and certainly with tears — that day in 514, when Cerdic the Saxon swept up it in his antic ships, and landed victoriously in Hamble Creek.

Nor could one blame the first English capital of William the Conqueror had it forgotten that Jane Austen "lived her last days" (as the inscription runs) in a house in College Street, or even that it was here, in Wolvesey Palace, that Alfred wrote the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; or that even within its walls was preserved the veritable round table of Arthur and his knights. The Norman conquered last, and so is remembered first. For the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle you must ask at the Cathedral library — which treasures a very ancient copy, but is chiefly proud of its great illuminated Vulgate — for the Norman Chronicle you read the strong stones of Winchester.

Yes, although, as the verger will show

you, Winchester Cathedral includes all architectural styles in an evolutionary progression, you leave it — unless, of course, you are an expert on the lookout for mere delicacies of stone — remembering only the Norman, a style of architecture something between Druid stones and castles. You always feel in a Norman Church that it was built by men more accustomed to the sword than the trowel, more used to building castles than churches. Take the fine old church of Romsey, some miles from Winchester, on the way to Salisbury. It looks as if it could stand a — Norman — siege at this day.

Of Romsey, however, more presently, for on the road 'twixt it and Winchester, there is one halt to be made, somewhat indifferently indeed, at a place striking a very different note than Norman architecture. This is Hursley, in whose church lie two of the meekest men born of woman, — to wit, Richard Cromwell and John Keble. "The Christian Year" is among the classics of piety, and there is there-

fore no need to wonder at its great fame, for, notoriously, piety chooses its classics badly. I am a lover of hymns, yet I confess there has always seemed to me a tameness about Keble's verses which was spiritless even for High Church Christianity. Therefore, there seemed to me an ironic fitness in that John Keble should lie in the chancel, and Richard Cromwell — the mildest mouse ever born of a mountain — beneath the tower.

Above Richard Cromwell's vault is a large memorial tablet erected by an aged spinster daughter and crowded with many names. As one reads these names one grows to forget a public incompetency, in the pathos of a succession of domestic sorrows, — the pathos of frustrated fatherhood; for most of these names belong to tiny children, some barely a year old, some mere breaths that came and went without a name. One can say no more of Richard, Protector, after this — one can only remember the little coffins.

But it is bracing to reach Romsey.

The very name has a robust sound, and the sight of the strong, weather-beaten old church stirs one like a martial tune. For, in spite of two beautiful early English windows, the church, as I have said, is really a Norman castle in the shape of a cross. Yet, for all its stern appearance, Romsey Church had for the greater part of its history been an abbey of nuns, that is from something like 907 to the dissolution of the monasteries — the parent church having been built early in the Twelfth century on the site of a Saxon nunnery. The names of the abbesses are preserved in the church, as also the deed by which the townspeople bought the abbey church from Henry VIII. for £100 to use as a parish church, after that monarch had first "dissolved and plundered" the abbey. The verbs are the present vicar's. Henry VIII. is only second to Oliver Cromwell in the regard of English vicars and vergers. And yet we owe to him the English Church!

On the general principle, which I hold

to be good, of not celebrating details which I imperfectly understand, I give it as the vicar's opinion rather than my own that Romsey Abbey is almost a perfect Norman church; though even an amateur might guess something of the sort from the fact that there is so obviously little except staunch Norman work in it. It is, I admit, a temptation to dwell upon the perfect preservation of the beautiful Norman clerestory and the stately Norman triforium, about which there are unique architectural characteristics; but to do so would be to strike a note of insincerity in these simple pages. Old churches pride themselves on many erudite peculiarities which I am apt to overlook, or, looking upon which, even with occasional understanding, am apt to disregard. I have noticed, for example, that vergers are always particularly proud if their church possesses a "piscina," — a sort of sacred waste pipe, down which the wine left over from the sacrament was poured. Now I see nothing specially to stir my imagina-

tion or charm my fancy in a "piscina," so I propose to leave piscinæ alone. Similarly in this church of Romsey I must leave the niceties of its Norman to those stone-scholars who understand and value them, and be satisfied to recall that with what I take to be the sentiment of Norman architecture Romsey Church is rarely charged.

For the full enjoyment of this energising sentiment you must needs be energetic too, and mount the spiral of strangling stone which leads to the tower. On the way up you will meet with long narrow doors, opening on to the arcaded galleries which run round the triforium and clerestory like open secret passages, and give you giddy views of the length and depth of the church. If you would enter into the spirit of this strong Norman stone, you must edge your way along these galleries, feeling the stone everywhere pressing close about you as though it longs to wall you in like some of those old nuns, or throw you down, a broken

scream, to the hungry stone beneath. Then, coming out again on to the comparative escape of the stone stairs, you mount further, and suddenly, at the pushing of a door, you take a sort of upward dive into a playground of fresh air, and there you are at the blue top of the world.

The world is never so beautiful as seen from a church tower. How the rivers glitter, and how green is the grass, and into what picturesque groups the old houses arrange themselves! I can see all else there is to see in Romsey from the church tower: Palmerston's statue in the square, and the river Test flashing like a scythe in and out among the green meadows, with a stately white mansion, once Palmerston's, proud as two swans upon its bank.

These things and nought besides — but the whole, pleasant world. What a good place to have been born in, to be sure. How ungrateful of man even to have conceived of another. A better he has never

even conceived, for all his trying, though no doubt there are dead men down there in the churchyard who would enviously persuade us otherwise. One need not pity them for their illusions, for we may be sure that in their day they held fast to this good world none the less because of their somewhat greedy hopes of a better. Still we are more fortunate than they, by the attainment of an honester philosophy. We take this world with both arms, love it with undivided hearts, and, if we too must speak with a sigh of its "transitory" joys, the adjective is not one of depreciation, but rather one of aggrandisement; for, whereas we were once taught that earthly joys should be held with a light grasp because they pass away, it seems to us wiser to hold them the tighter for that very reason.

Take it, love —
'T will soon be over,
With the thickening of the clover,
With the calling of the plover,
Take it, take it, lover.

Take it, boy—
The blossom's falling,
And the farewell cuckoo's calling;
While the sun and showers are one,
Take your love out in the sun.

Take it, girl—
And fear no after,
Take your fill of all this laughter,
Laugh or not, the tears will fall,
Take the laughter first of all.

So the summer-wind sang round the church tower, as I lay and loved the world and thanked God for life. It was scarcely a song for a church tower, but the wind proverbially bloweth as it listeth, and it was a week day too, it should be remembered.

The country between Winchester and Romsey is not very striking. Between Romsey and Salisbury it grows more interesting. The downs begin again, and the land swells and dimples once more, and loses boundary marks. About six miles from Salisbury, as the road softly ascends a shoulder of down, a circular

grassy hill rises on the right, and on the top of it stands a solitary conical tower which provokes curiosity, though as one dismounts and strolls up to it, it does little to satisfy it, beyond (and no doubt that is its object) pointing out the magnificent prospect of grassy down after down on the edge of which it stands, Salisbury spire shouldering the blue like a nursery giant miles away in the centre of the vast circle.

The tower is six-sided, with three blind windows on each side, and no door whatsoever. Just a dummy of brick. Is it a beacon? If so, to what end? No doubt it was built by forgotten men for some forgotten purpose; and, whether or not, the present usefulness of it suffices; in that it tempts the lazy cyclist (for the mental laziness of keeping on your machine is one of the dangers of the exploring cyclist) to walk the close sweet grass, gemmed thick with ladies' purses, and take in the blessed air. The wind has many songs — it sings round church

towers as we have just heard — but none sweeter than its clean crisp song over the downs; the sound of the foot that no one sees on the grass that no one sows. To me it seemed to be singing an overture to the ancient solitude upon which I was now entering, for this was one of the gates of Salisbury Plain, and the soft grassy mouldings of the land, smothered lines, maybe, of old entrenchments, mysterious mounds and markings, told me that my preoccupations for the next few days were to be ancient British and Roman in character, and that an irrational passion for Druid stones, tumuli, and Roman remains entirely unscientific in its expression, was about to be mightily indulged.

This love for nameless old stones, begun in childhood, and continuing until age, with no more sustenance of reason than the original wonder — how shall we account for it? Is it because we were once told that it was the fairies' chapel, or that on moonlit nights white-bearded Druids plunged their moon-shaped knives

into the white breasts of beautiful victims —within this circle that now stands so strangely on the moor? No, I think no visions so definite could have such power. It is by their possession of a suggestiveness that suggests everything and suggests nothing, that hints at awful stretches of time, and drops no word of their history, hints at terrible rituals, at ancient agonies of martyrdom unspeakable, at mysterious knowledge, at mysterious powers; such is the magic of these old stones.

And it is the same with the grassy tombs of chieftains whom no inscription names. No tombs in the world, however magnificent, are so impressive to the imagination. For always to know nothing is to imagine all.

CHAPTER VI

SARUM

Memory! — The Salisbury Avon — River nymphs — Boys bathing — Idyll of a shirt — The two cathedrals — Old Sarum — Pitt and his constituents — Richard Jefferies — A Cromwellian cannon.

"SARUM" — so the milestones; so the bishop; and so I, in search of a pretty word for a chapter heading, write "Sarum," though I reserve the right of saying "Salisbury" on occasion.

Mr. Lang, in one of his forgotten causeries — I mean forgotten, no doubt, by him, but remembered by every one else — tells how once a train in which he travelled stopping at Salisbury, a sad middle-aged lady in the carriage turned to another sad middle-aged lady and said: "Poor Jane! she had reason to

remember Salisbury." And Mr. Lang goes on to say how that remark continued to tease his mind, and how often afterwards he had wondered why it was that "Jane" should so particularly remember Salisbury. I write "Jane." The lady's name may have been another. That is no matter. I thought of her as Jane as I entered the old city an hour or so from dinner-time; for, I too, poor anonymous Jane, have reasons to remember Salisbury, reasons glad and sad, perhaps all sad now, because they were once all glad, — reasons for so much as referring to which I must apologise to the reader. All I should have said was that I had been at Salisbury before, and that, when I had taken a cup of tea, I knew exactly where to go to hire a boat, and knew exactly every turn of the pretty river Avon upon which I intended to spend the interval to sunset: knew where the yellow water lilies floated and ducked with the stream — the boys would be bathing near there at this hour and running about to dry themselves — knew

every arrowhead and root of meadow-sweet all the way along; that is, of course, "in a manner of speaking."

The Salisbury Avon is not so ambitious as its name-fellow of Stratford, not so broad, or deep, or, so far as the boatman is concerned, so long. But who wants running water, sedged and bulrushed, and brimming through rich water-meadows, to be ambitious? Let it be any little green-banked stream that will help to bear the boat along, though every few yards we grate its bed, or entangle ourselves in its streaming hair — it is enough.

I think that of all the creatures of man's fancy I would care most to meet a river nymph. There would be salt on the lips of sea-nymphs, and the flowers in their hair would be strange and not like flowers at all. A dryad I should love well, particularly if she lived in a very slim and saintly silver birch. But I think I should have to desert her for a water-nymph, with forget-me-not eyes and a walk like the running river. All that is fairest on earth

grows at the edge of the water — the fairest flowers and the fairest cities — for there the earth bends over, Narcissus-like, to gaze at himself; and my river-nymph would be made out of all beauty that ever grew or gazed therein. Earth should be her father and water her mother, and the moon and all the stars should be reflected in her face. She should have little bright fish for brethren, and the flowering rush, and all fair beings that root in earth and sway in water and breathe in air, should be her sisters. Hylas should come to our wedding in a dim chapel floored with white sand; and our children should be new little water-nymphs just like their mother, whom in time we would marry to young poets snared with strange singing at moonrise, and gently drowned into immortality on couches of living emerald. . . . Which, as the sternest of classics says, is absurd!

Yes, all the arrowheads are here. I have n't missed one as yet. And the meadowsweet. There is but one piece

missing, and that I know where to find between the pages of a book. And there are the boys bathing — I hope not the same boys. Boys bathing, with, I hesitate to add, two or three sprightly little girls to guard, and, presently it transpires, devilishly to steal, their clothes. Indeed, as I come upon them, a quaint little drama begins. One of the lads, just as he was born — only rather bigger — is pursuing a wicked little girl who has stolen his shirt. She has evidently been wading too, for her petticoats are tucked up, and her legs are bare. Her hair streams behind her, and her petticoats escape from their tucking, and flow about her as she runs. The boy is rapidly gaining, breathing slaughter, and there are wild screams of excitement. In a moment, however, she has placed a broad ditch between them, which, for some reason I cannot make out, the boy is unable to cross. He runs along his side of it, evidently seeking a crossing, but, finding none, calls a parley. She only answers with

laughter and holds his shirt derisively from the other side almost within his reach. Then once more despair seizes him, and, with the energy of it, he is suddenly on the other side — but not before the girl has found another point of vantage. And so the chase goes on. Once he is for returning to the rest of his clothes, and she, disappointed, calls out an "O, well then, here it is," just to allure him back again, and start the game afresh. The lure succeeds, and once more begins the savage chase, the wild girl screams, the young limbs flashing, the petticoats flying. When the bank hid them from me the end was not yet, nor the terrible vengeance that would no doubt fall upon that wicked, but, it struck me, charming little girl. Or would she succeed in making terms? I fear not. For she was yet some way from the age when her sex will get her out of any possible scrape, not to speak of the scrapes it will get her into.

Well, while this was enacting, the spire of the Cathedral had been rising higher

and higher, as it seemed, above the meadows, soaring clear of the town, of which now one could see nothing, left behind in the windings of the river. It is so on the river that one gains the fullest sense of its impressive size, and the great beauty of its vast proportions. I can imagine few finer pictures than these flat water-meadows suddenly overawed with this mighty apparition of stone, to reflect which, and thus double the impressive effect, the Avon seems to have been set to flow just where it does. Seen from any point, Salisbury Cathedral is impressive. It is lovely indeed, seen from its beautiful Close, but seen from the river it is loveliest of all.

As for its interior, I know that it is the most perfect, the purest, and the best proportioned, early English in England, and indeed it is magnificent. Yet somehow it is too perfect, too faultlessly accomplished, to stir the imagination, as I at least find mine stirred by those ruder Norman churches. I know it is a preposterous

feeling to have. One might almost as well prefer a Druid stone to Henry the Sixth's chapel, or Cædmon's Vision to Milton's "Paradise Lost"! I know and yet, if I must choose, it must be Winchester and not Salisbury. Perhaps the absence of stained glass has something to do with the coldness of Salisbury, but, whatever the reason, I cannot give it my heart.

But this is a digression, for as yet, it will be remembered, I am upon the river, and as I leave bathers and other disturbers of the rural peace behind, and pull more and more into the upper reaches of quietness, a curious green hill begins to loom on my (rowing) left, one circular mound upon another, flanked by grassy hummocks, and approached by grassy causeways. This is Old Sarum, once a Roman camp, then a Saxon town, a cathedral city till 1258, in 1735 a rotten borough capable of returning the elder Pitt, now a haunted rabbit-warren and the most fascinating buried city out of a fairy tale.

If only country people would be kind enough to go on believing in fairies, they might have charming things to tell about such a place as Old Sarum, but, so far as I can hear, all the fairies have been bought up by the enterprising editors of fairy books. At all events they dance on their green hills no more, and even children have to be taught fairies, as they are taught arithmetic, yawning all the time.

The imaginative grown-up person, therefore, must do his best with his own fancy at Sarum, and, if fairies seem a little childish for his years, there are ancient Romans to think of, a ghostly cathedral to build, and a picture, if he chooses, to be painted of Pitt addressing his constituents, — a quite numerous electorate of rabbits and moles.

If you moor your boat, and walk the intervening fields, you find that the place is even more preserved in plan and foundations than it seemed at the distance. Great moats, with trees growing deep down in them, run round the base, and

are spanned by causeways which lead up at last quite steeply to the circular plateau, perhaps some three acres in extent, where stood the old camp, and later the Cathedral, of which a fragment still remains. This fragment of stone wall makes one, so to speak, a little company, suggesting builders comparatively close at hand in history; but else those grass-muffled contours of the old earthworks affect one with peculiar lonesomeness — a dread of the great deep of the past, such as one has of the great deep of space, the same shudder that goes through one as we look down from a dizzy height.

One clutches at the thought of Pitt and his constituents as at a handrail — or one recalls such a tag of history as that here on this forsaken, but still consecrated, ground, was drawn up that "Ordinal of Offices for the Use of Sarum," which was our first English Prayer Book. This is really a much more important place in history than that splendid grandchild yonder — which has had no history to

speak of — though nothing is afoot here but the growing of the grass and the breeding of minor animals, while yonder they are at evensong before a jewelled shrine. But, as you think of that, that ghostly Cathedral begins to rise about you, and a dead monk is a peculiarly startling form of departed spirit. . . .

As one hurries back to one's little boat, the old moats are already filling with night, and early shadows are trooping along the causeways. Soon it will be very dark, and very still, at Old Sarum.

I said just now that Salisbury had practically no history, and it is surprisingly true. So far as I have read, nothing ever seems to have happened at Salisbury, and I seem to see this absence of history in the rather blank look of its streets. Not a single great man seems ever to have been born or even died here, unless we are to except bishops, and if there are any buried in the Cathedral I offer my apologies to their slighted shades. But

there is a monument in the Cathedral which I was glad to see, a monument to one of those martyrs of literature which go far to justify Carlyle's famous comparison of literary history to the Newgate Calendar,— namely, Richard Jefferies, who was born and lived at Coate, not many miles away, and "who," as the inscription runs, "observing the works of Almighty God with a poet's eye, has enriched the literature of his country and won for himself a place amongst those who have made men happier and wiser."

Poor Jefferies! Well meant as the bust is, it is to be feared he would hear of it with a bitter laugh, and suggest a less placid inscription, which one ventures to write for him:—

This bust is raised to the memory of RICHARD JEFFERIES, a man of genius: a naturalist of remarkable gifts, a master of English prose; whom while it was possible to help we did not help, but left to fight unaided a battle, fought with rare but wasting courage, against ill-health, poverty, and the neglect of an untrained public; but to whom,

doing ourselves no more honour than him, we now raise this ironical, unnecessary memorial.

I have said that no great men seem to have died in Salisbury. I must not forget to add that three great men lived here, men indeed no less great than Massinger, Addison, and Fielding. And one great thing did once happen in Salisbury, and that was a very great thing, — namely, the printing of "The Vicar of Wakefield." Winchester would, of course, turn up its nose at these merely literary distinctions, but then it is not every city that can boast the bones of Anglo-Saxon Kings.

And, by the way, before I forget Old Sarum, should you ever go there, you should walk observantly a few yards down the highway that goes past the old city (walking away from Salisbury), and watch for a stile in the hedge on the right. If you cross this stile and walk a few yards straight into the field — as you can do, even if the corn is growing, for a little lane is always left by the sower — you

will come upon a curious, and I imagine uniquely placed, relic: an old Cromwellian cannon, buried to its waist in the ground, its harmless bore pointed to the sky, and making a little well for the rain.

CHAPTER VII

TO HAZLITT'S WINTERSLOW

Hazlitt — The downs and bee-orchids — Winterslow Hutt to-day — Brisk business — Hazlitt as Winterslow knows him — The old sign — The lioness and the mail coach — "The soldier" — Hazlitt's love of literature.

WHY I should make a pilgrimage to Hazlitt's Winterslow for the third time in my life I hardly know. It must be from sheer force of habit, for only two others except myself are known to have made the pilgrimage, and I suppose no one reads Hazlitt nowadays, except two distinguished dramatic critics — not the two pilgrims referred to. Stevenson, of course, set a fashion of referring to him, but even his influence could not go beyond that. Nor is Hazlitt's a personality that captivates the heart or the imagination. His memory is acrid

and almost unsavoury. So far as one can trust the re-creation of him alone possible to us, through contemporary impressions, his own letters, and that silly-sordid "Liber Amoris," he seems to have been one of the most disagreeable men that ever lived. And yet, as I have said, I seem to care so much about him that, though I have been twice before, I cannot leave Salisbury without diverging six miles and back to visit again the place of almost sinister loneliness which he chose for his literary hermitage, and where some of his finest work was done. No doubt the simple explanation is in the conclusion of the last sentence. At all events Hazlitt could write, and to see a place where something was really written, a place where the fire once came down, is a good deal — or nothing at all, as one happens to be constituted.

Besides, you will find no stretch of down more spacious, more breezy, more openhanded with its sunshine, than the fair and fat six miles which bring you to

Winterslow. Then, too, earlier in the year, there are bee-orchids to be gathered on the grassy top of the down, and the common orchid, huge Salisbury spires of perfume, liberally contributes to the general sweetness of the air. For the first two or three miles the country is laughing and open and sunny-browed. Literally it is very lonely, you hardly meet a soul, but the air is so clear that you feel you have every farm you can see for company, and there is always the great Cathedral in sight. But, once over the brow of the hill, even that disappears, and you begin to feel that you are really alone. The road dives into the trough of prodigious land waves, crests one to dive again; and the great scoops of down are no longer cultivated, but are beginning to grow gloomy and even savage with drifts of wind-sown pines, mere swarthy scrub as yet, chance children of occasional plantations upon the ridges. They give a villainous look to the grassy slopes, the kind of ragged-stick-and-a-lonely-road

look that tramps six days unshaved are apt to wear. Then a barrow of exceptional length, called, I believe, Long Barrow, presently adds to the loneliness on the left of the road. Melancholy begins to steal upon you, and you feel inclined to look over your shoulder, though the sun is as bright as ever overhead.

Meanwhile, those little boundary boards between township and township have been busily running over the names of the many Winterbournes, into which one not very big straggling village seems to be nicely divided: Winterbourne Earls, Winterbourne Dantsey, Winterbourne Gunner, and, I think, others. A simple stranger enquiring for Winterbourne is almost as bewildered as one might be who should ask for London and really mean Clapham. However, Winterslow was easier. There is only one Winterslow. "Winterslow — Gumbledon" called out the little two-handed frontier post, and after a steep drop, there on the left side of a rather dull plain, partly cultivated again,

was a lonely, very dilapidated little inn: "Winterslow Hutt."

Winterslow Hutt is terribly in need of those three coats of paint mentioned in leases, though it would be hardly worth while to paint the tumble-down wooden bay which projects in front of the more durable, but no less weather-worn, building. The sign-post on the opposite side of the road is now a mere stump; wind or lightning has split it midway. The wind blows drearily about the place even this summer day, and it is all exceeding desolate. If there is an owner to so ownerless-looking a place, I hope he will not resent my kindly-intentioned remark: that he has neglected his property long enough, if he wishes it to remain a property, not to speak of its being an inn. But, of course, that is none of my business.

The pleasant landlady seemed no less conscious of the depression of the place than myself, and when I gave my small order, the whole plain seemed to reverberate with unwonted business. It was

like a poor artist having sold a picture. Winterslow Hutt had actually sold a glass of milk. Presently a young man dropped in — startlingly, as out of the sky, for there are no visible houses at Winterslow — and ordered a ginger-beer. Business was becoming absolutely brisk, and quite a cheerful murmur of conversation began to fill the little parlour.

The inn had changed hands since my last visit, so I asked the old question like a new-comer. Did the landlady know anything of one William Hazlitt, a sort of writer fellow, who once lived in the inn years ago — oh, ninety years ago?

Well, said the landlady, that was curious! and called her husband to join in, for only a few days ago two young gentlemen had called and asked the same question, and they had promised to send the name and publisher of the book which this Hazlitt had written — such apparently was the landlady's impression — about Winterslow. Perhaps I was acquainted with the book?

Oh, yes, I had it with me: "Sketches and Essays; and Winterslow (Essays written there), by William Hazlitt."

"But," I said, "it is not *about* Winterslow," — and explained that the book had come to have the title from Hazlitt's attachment to the place, and so on. This was a distinct disappointment. No doubt they had expected a sort of guide-book to Winterslow, and I am afraid that a certain local farmer, who was mentioned as desirous of procuring the mysterious volume by this mysterious writer, will change his mind when this disappointing information gets abroad in the district.

It was evident that mine for once was to be the proud privilege of imparting information. I knew the room where Hazlitt used to write, or at all events the room which former tenants had pointed out as that. So I showed it to them, a mere place of lumber, long since uninhabitable. In return for this information the landlord took me to the barn to show me the old sign. I will confess to conceiving

absurd ideas of purchase — before I saw it. I had fancied some picturesque old painted wood, delicately weather-beaten. Instead I found a huge shield of rusty iron weighing surely a ton, on which one slowly discerned the ghost of part of a pheasant on the ghost of part of a moor. The mere cost of conveyance gave me pause, and then what to do with it, if acquired! It was obviously unfitted for a drawing-room. So, after careful consideration, I left it for the next enthusiast. I have no doubt that a telegram, if sent not too long after the perusal of this chapter, might still secure it.

But if the inn knew nothing of Hazlitt, it was still keenly and gratefully reminiscent of the one real event in its history. Winterslow, I should explain, is on the main road from Exeter to London, and was then a stopping place for mail coaches. Now, on the night of Sunday the 20th of October, 1816, while the coach was drawn up in front of the inn, a remarkable thing happened. Suddenly

a lioness, *a lioness*, sprang from nowhere and fastened its fangs in the throat of the no doubt foam-flecked and steaming leader. It had escaped from a travelling show, and *that* is the event which has written itself indelibly in Winterslow memories, and is still as vivid there as the day after the event, though it will soon be eighty-three years ago.

That so remarkable an event should not be forgotten, a London artist made an imaginative sketch of it. A copy hangs on the parlour wall. "The Lioness attacking the Horse of the Exeter Mail Coach" runs the inscription, and I was frivolous enough to copy the accompanying statement that the picture had been "Drawn from the information of Joseph Pike, guard of the mail at the time of the event, on the night of Sunday, the 20th of October, 1816, at Winterslow Hut, near Salisbury. The ferocious animal had escaped from the caravan of an exhibitor of wild beasts, etc."

Also I noted that "To Thomas Has-

ker, Esq., superintendent of His Majesty's mail coaches, this print by permission is most respectfully dedicated by his obedient servant, Robert Pollard." The print represents the inn much as it is at present, though more prosperous-looking, of course, and with the pheasant proudly swinging in its place. The coach is drawn up in front, and while the leader plunges with the long yellow lioness at its throat, Joseph Pike strikes an attitude with a blunderbuss in his right hand, and five gentlemen in top hats lean half out of the inn window in consternation. It is a spirited and, no doubt, quite realistic piece of work, and conveys to us not only the scene itself, but the very atmosphere of the time.

That the reader should be in possession of all my available information on so remarkable an event, I copied, too, this extract from "The Field," May 2, 1896, under the heading of "Notable Horses": —

"In the old coaching days there were many horses more or less famous running before or

behind the bars on the different roads. Pomegranate was such a thief on the racecourse, and developed such a bad temper in the stable, that he was sold to a coach proprietor, and eventually found his way into the Exeter Mail, and was the leader attacked by the escaped lioness as the coach was passing Winterslow Hutt, near Salisbury."

Before I left I found that Winterslow had one more memory which I am proud to think I may be the first to chronicle. "Do you remember the soldier shooting from the top of the hill?" said the landlord to the young man who had ordered a bottle of ginger-beer, I, meanwhile, having kept things going with another glass of milk. No, "the soldier" was before his time. I liked "*the* soldier."

Well, it was a tame enough little reminiscence, after all, but if you ever visit Winterslow you will realise that a little excitement there may go a long way. Some years ago a young soldier had made a bet that he could hit the pheasant sign from the top of the road — a pretty long

shot I should say — and he *had* hit the pheasant! And that is all!

"I have felt the dint of the bullet with my finger," said the landlord, with the air of a man who had inspected secret sources of information — "Yes! the dint's there sure enough to this day."

And, of course, the moral of it all is: Don't write books if you would be remembered at Winterslow. But, indeed, what should Winterslow do with books? What is there in Hazlitt for Winterslow that Winterslow should remember him?

That Hazlitt should remember Winterslow one can better understand, particularly if you follow his example and wander half-a-day about its waste places. It is a fine solitude for the imagination. Someone should write a book on the Solitudes of England. It would be a charming title, and the book might be delightfully illustrated with pictures of old inns! For solitude in England is sown thick with inns. Where indeed should inns be if not in a solitude, which such an inn as

Winterslow Hutt tends to deepen rather than cheer?

When I left the inn I felt that the transactions had been inadequate as a service to Hazlitt's memory, so I found a quiet corner of the down and read, for I suppose at least the hundredth time, this passage of charming fancy, and noble eloquence, and that touching love for literature which has in it a pathos peculiarly its own: —

"I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of the stage; but I think still higher of Nature, and next to that, of books. They are the nearest to our thoughts: they wind into the heart; the poet's verse slides into the current of our blood. We read them when young, we remember them when old. We read there of what has happened to others; we feel that it has happened to ourselves. They are to be had everywhere cheap and good. We breathe but the air of books: we owe everything to their authors on this side barbarism; and we pay them easily with contempt while living, and with an epitaph when dead!

"Michael Angelo is beyond the Alps; Mrs.

Siddons has left the stage, and us to mourn her loss. Were it not so, there are neither picture-galleries nor theatres royal on Salisbury Plain, where I write this; but here, even here, with a few old authors, I can manage to get through the summer or the winter months, without ever knowing what it is to feel *ennui*. They sit with me at breakfast; they walk out with me before dinner. After a long walk through unfrequented tracks, after starting the hare from the fern, or hearing the wing of the raven rustling above my head, or being greeted by the woodman's 'stern good-night,' as he strikes into his narrow homeward path, I can 'take mine ease at mine inn,' beside the blazing hearth, and shake hands with Signor Orlando Friscobaldo, as the oldest acquaintance I have. Ben Jonson, learned Chapman, Master Webster, and Master Heywood, are there; and seated round, discourse the silent hours away. Shakespeare is there himself, not in Cibber's manager's coat. Spenser is hardly yet returned from a ramble through the woods, or is concealed behind a group of nymphs, fawns and satyrs. Milton lies on the table, as on an altar, never taken up or laid down without reverence. Lyly's Endymion sleeps with the moon, that shines in at the

window; and a breath of wind stirring at a distance seems a sigh from the tree under which he grew old. Faustus disputes in one corner of the room with fiendish faces, and reasons of divine astrology. Bellafront soothes Matheo, Vittoria triumphs over her judges, and old Chapman repeats one of the hymns of Homer, in his own fine translation! I should have no objection to pass my life in this manner out of the world, not thinking of it, nor it of me; neither abused by my enemies, nor defended by my friends; careless of the future, but sometimes dreaming of the past, which might as well be forgotten."

No one can read this without feeling how Hazlitt loved literature, and it is my humble opinion that, as the rationale of criticism is better understood, it will be seen that such love-passion for literature is the vital, and therefore the most important, element in the best criticism. Our present day critics may be more accurate in their judgments than Hazlitt, you might prefer to seek their opinion on some delicate point, but in so far as they never venture or wish to wear their hearts

on their sleeves, never write of the greatest author save with a slight reserve of superiority in their manner, would n't be caught in a boyish gladness and rapture over a new book for the world: in so far — and it is further than they dream of — do they fail as critics, whatever their learning and whatever their subtlety.

There is a well-known English critic, in some respects the worst we have, who confesses to closing a critical essay on Balzac with tears in his eyes, so impressed had he been by contemplation of his master. The "criticism" may be — what you will; but those tears are already in the temple of fame. *Quia multum amavit* — the true critic will seek to win that for his epitaph. And surely it must be Hazlitt's. For he loved literature so well that somehow one cannot help loving him too, in spite of that acrid and almost unsavoury memory. And I should not be surprised if I should pay even a fourth visit to Winterslow Hutt for his sake.

CHAPTER VIII

OF SHEEP AND OTHER SALISBURY EXCITEMENTS

A sheep-fair — Walton's library — "Flint Jack" — Bemerton and George Herbert — Wilton, Sidney and "Mr. W. H."

ON the morning I was to leave Salisbury, I was awakened by a running murmur of plaintive sound. The street was sad with the cry of driven sheep. The downs were thus rolling by every avenue into the city, and twenty thousand sheep were to fill the market place that day. I learnt the number from a serious-browed, broad-clothed farmer at breakfast. He was sternly full of the occasion.

"It's a great day in Salisbury to-day," he said, as soon as I sat down, evidently longing, like every other human

being, to share the ruling passion with another.

I guessed that he referred to the sheep, so I did my best to be sympathetic, though sheep — out of Theocritus or Spenser — is not a subject on which I talk easily. However, I succeeded better than I expected, by a simple plan which I have often found useful: that of asking those rudimentary questions, which, though they betray an entire ignorance of the cherished subject, seem no less acceptable to the enthusiast than the exchange of valuable experience. I did n't quite begin by asking: "What is a sheep?" But whatever the next simplest question may be, I certainly asked it. Had you met me half an hour afterwards you would have found me a surprising authority on sheep-farming, though at the time of writing my mind has resumed its pristine disinterestedness on the subject.

Remembering Cobbett, I asked the current price of South Down ewes, and, if I remember aright, it was about forty-

two shillings; but before acting on the information, the reader would do well to verify it. I looked in at the market place to see if the sheep had been allowed to bring their starlings with them, but found that they had not. What a noisy ocean! Twenty thousand woolly waves all baa-baaing together. And, I suppose, not a thought in one single farmer's head that a sheep may possibly have its own business in the universe quite apart from the feeding of man — though as you look a sheep in the face, it is difficult to imagine what that business may be. Perhaps, indeed, its one aim in life is to grow up good mutton, and its highest ambition a handsome funeral in the form of caper sauce. If so, it is wiser than it looks — for who can doubt that the farmers are right and that sheep were made to be fleeced and eaten, and for no other more transcendental purpose at all? As a topic of conversation I found them as monotonous as mutton, and, as the reader may by this time be too ready to agree with me, I

will here say no more on the subject of sheep.

Before leaving the town, I designed to gratify an old desire to see and, if possible, handle some of the volumes from Izaak Walton's library, which are preserved in the Cathedral — his son, of course, having been a canon of Salisbury. This, after I had taken my morning lesson in architecture from the verger, the kindness of a gentle old librarian enabled me to do. Should this ever meet his eye, I beg once more to offer him my thanks for the patience with which, catalogue in hand, he went from shelf to shelf, picking out the volumes once so reverently read by "the unseen good old man." For the volumes are not encased in illustrious isolation, but take their place among their fellows, according to the general classification, with nothing to mark them from the rest; which in a sense is charming, and in a sense is unwise — for the library being in daily use, they thus run a risk of being borrowed once too often. Would the

library, one wonders, be too proud to accept from some Waltonian a book-case for their special housing?

Thanks to the librarian's gracious perseverance, I suppose I held in my hands most of the volumes containing the fine old signature "Izaak Walton"; a signature, by the way, which, we noted, occurs in two forms,—one the firm neat signature familiar in fac-similes, the other a rather sprawly, flourished signature, such as a young man might affect, and which indeed may have been the signature of the younger Izaak, a signature with which neither of us was familiar. Thus I handled the "Florio Montaigne," from which he got the story of Montaigne and his cat, the "Camerarius," in which he found many a quaint marvel, some of his strange old naturalists, and, with particular interest, the quaint pieties of his especial favourite, the saintly Dr. Sibbes—or "Sibs," as Walton usually spelled it. With peculiar emotion I looked upon Dr. Sibs' "Bowels Opened: or a Discovery

of the Union and Communion betwixt Christ and the Church, and consequently betwixt Him and every Believing Soul." It was on the fly leaf of this volume that Walton first wrote his famous epigram on Sibs, and here I read it again in his own hand: —

> "Of this blest man let this just praise be given,
> Heaven was in him, before he was in heaven."

Walton was evidently a little vain of this pious pun, for he copies it again in another of Dr. Sibbes' volumes. Of all his books he seems to have valued these most, so highly, indeed, that he bequeaths two of them, with separate mention in his will: "To my son Izaak I give Docr. Sibbs his 'Soules Conflict;' and to my daughter his 'Brewsed Rede,' desiring them to reade them so as to be well acquainted with them." "And I also give to her," the passage relating to his books continues, "all my bookes at Winchester and Droxford, and what ever in those two places are or I can call mine, except a

trunk of linen, which I give to my son Izaak; but if he doe not live to (marry or) make use of it, then I give the same to my grand-dafter, Anne Hawkins. And I give my dafter Docr. Hall's works, which be now at Farnham. To my son Izaak I give all my books, not yet given, at Farnham Castell; and a deske of prints and pickters; also a Cabinet nere my bed's head, in which are some little things that he will valew, tho of noe great worth." Other books bequeathed are "Doctor Donns sermons, which I have heard preacht and read with much content," to his son-in-law, Dr. Hawkins, and "to Mr. John Darbishire the Sermons of Mr. Anthony Faringdon or of dor. Sanderson, which my executor thinks fit."

How precious Walton held the spiritual property of his books is best shown by this last extract. Books are still too precious even at the end of the seventeenth century, for him extravagantly to bequeath two at once to a friend. Mr. John Darbishire may have either Mr. Antony Far-

ingdon's sermons or those of Bishop Sanderson. But he must n't expect both. Alas! how far we have travelled from this religious regard of books, and how fantastic such bequests in a modern will would seem to a family lawyer, though, indeed, from a purely commercial view, there have been several editions de luxe of late which would be by no means despicable inheritances. For example:

To my old and tried friends, W. and S. J., I do give and bequeath my copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer; and to that excellent poet, P. S., I offer my Kelmscott Keats as a remembrancer of affection, and a symbol of my great delight during life in his divine poems; also to Mistress J. N. I do bequeath my Edinburgh Stevenson in gratitude that I did sometimes look upon her beautiful face; to my little daughter, I commend the writings of that great spiritual doctor, George Meredith, not in the forbidding library edition, but in the friendly old editions which she will find much marked by my fatherly pencil —

and so on. It is to be hoped that in the event of such a will, the legatees would

forget the pecuniary value of the books, and think of them only as spiritual property, as in Walton's day, when —

> " . . . a book was still a book
> Where a wistful man might look,
> Feeling something through the whole
> Beating like a human soul."

I suppose that to many my desire to handle books once held by Izaak Walton will seem no less incomprehensible than my curious interest in a forlorn, dilapidated Winterslow. Perhaps they will understand it even less, and biologists of the Italian School have, no doubt, already found a long name for this peculiar form of possession.

What is their name, I wonder, for the man who collects flint-heads? I ask, because Salisbury contains for me still another interesting place of pilgrimage: the Blackmore Museum. Here is stored, perhaps, the most important collection of prehistoric antiquities in England, but it is not the genuine, or supposed genuine, antiquities that chiefly interested me, but the

collection of the spurious arrow-heads and other flint implements made by the famous "Flint Jack."

"Flint Jack" is one of the most distinguished of those heartless men of genius, who from the beginning have preyed upon the innocence of antiquaries. A peasant born in a county of barrows and cave dwellings, he was early familiarised with the "gentleman" who circled round an excavation like a vulture, and doted on certain ancient rubbish like a lover. It was difficult to see what the gentleman saw in bits of arrow-shaped flint, but, whatever it was, it seemed to make him very happy. Besides, it was a happiness for which he was evidently prepared to pay. Unfortunately, however, the cave-men who were supposed to have shaped these arrow-heads had left behind them a supply quite inadequate to the modern demand. What could be more natural than to repair their deficiency? Arrow-heads were easy enough to make. What a cave-man could do surely a nineteenth

century peasant could do as well. Antiquaries would be just as happy with the imitation. Besides, they would n't actually be imitation. The flint would at least be as old in one case as in the other. So "Flint Jack" became the Burns of flint — and as long as men collect arrowheads he will be remembered. Probably "Flint Jack" had few opportunities for immortality. I congratulate him on so brilliantly taking one within his reach.

If Salisbury itself be somewhat poor in memories, it is surrounded by places amply historical. Clarendon is close by, and still closer are Bemerton and Wilton. The two latter places I planned to take on my way to Stonehenge. Bemerton is about a mile out of Salisbury, on the Wilton road, a long village — "more pleasant than healthful" in Walton's time — lying between the Avon bank and the highway. Here, of course, George Herbert lived his gentle life and meditated his pious acrostics. His tiny church is still in use, near the riverside, the river here

suddenly spreading itself out in a fresh and glittering reach.

For those who still read Walton's "Lives" — I fear they may not be too many — that mile between Salisbury and Bemerton will seem a mile of holy ground accredited as are few Palestines. It was over this very road Herbert used to walk twice a week to hear the music in Salisbury Cathedral, for "his chiefest recreation was Music, in which heavenly art he was a most excellent master, and did himself compose many Divine Hymns and Anthems, which he set or sung to his lute or viol." Not only was it the cathedral music that drew him thus to Salisbury, but little music-parties among his friends, of which Walton gives us charming glimpses. But the association that will be uppermost in the mind of the literary pilgrim, as he meditatively lingers over that sacred mile, will be a story of Herbert's practical piety, like that of the early saints, which I beg leave to recall to the reader in Walton's own words: —

"In another walk to Salisbury, he saw a poorish man with a poorer horse, that was fallen under his load; they were both in distress, and needed present help; which Mr. Herbert perceiving, put off his canonical coat, and helped the poor man to unload, and after to load his horse. The poor man blessed him for it, and he blessed the poor man; and was so like the Good Samaritan, that he gave him money to refresh both himself and his horse; and told him, "That if he loved himself he should be merciful to his beast." Thus he left the poor man, and at his coming to his musical friends at Salisbury, they began to wonder that Mr. George Herbert, which used to be so trim and clean, came into that company so soiled and discomposed; but he told them the occasion. And when one of the company told him "He had disparaged himself by so dirty an employment," his answer was, "That the thought of what he had done would prove music to him at midnight; and that the omission of it

would have upbraided and made discord in his conscience, whensoever he should pass by that place, for if I be bound to pray for all that be in distress, I am sure that I am bound, so far as it is in my power, to practise what I pray for. And though I do not wish for the like occasion every day, yet let me tell you I would not willingly pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul, or showing mercy; and I praise God for this occasion. And now let's tune our instruments."

Herbert must often, too, have walked the two or three miles in the other direction, which bring one to Wilton, the lordly home of his kinsfolk, the Earls of Pembroke — the home perhaps (almost surely, say many) of "Mr. W. H.," and certainly one of the homes of Sir Philip Sidney. I think it was Hazlitt who could still read "The Arcadia" with delight — or was it Coleridge? Whichever it was, he was probably the last man to be grateful for that interminable pleasure. Yet, if one can no longer read it, the book once

meant so much to so many beautiful and gallant people, has lain about in so many fragrant boudoirs, been the mirror of chivalry in which so many knightly young faces have sought themselves, that one cannot turn the leaves of a folio "Arcadia" to this day without filling the room with the perfume of dead roses. Then, too, one can pick out the fine verses here and there, in which Sidney hid a very human heart amid all the shepherdess ribbons of his fashionable conceits. As one looks on the lock of Elizabeth's hair given to Sidney, which is still preserved at Wilton, with the courtier's sonnet-in-waiting attached, or is reminded by the paintings in the drawing-room that the "Arcadia" was written to please his sister in the pleasant Wilton gardens; one is thinking all the time of the old heart tragedy behind that glittering career — thinking of Lady Penelope Rich, and "Astrophel and Stella." Then, as in another room we come upon the beautiful face of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, it

cannot but strike us as curious that the tragic mysteries behind the two great personal poems of English poetry should be in the keeping of the undivulging Wilton peace.

CHAPTER IX

OF BOOKS AS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS: AN INTERLUDE

I ONCE had a dream of editing a little library of books for the scholar gipsy, such books, in such miniature yet comfortable *format*, as he would care, and be able, to carry with him in a wayfaring knapsack. Nothing has ever been so exquisite as the *format* of that little unborn library. If you can imagine exactly the kind of book that would go with a meal of bread and honey by the roadside, you will have some idea of the deliciousness of my edition, say, of Spenser's Minor Poems. Well, I took the dream to a publisher, and, as he was a lover of beautiful books as well as a publisher, he thought it a charming little dream, and longed to set paper-makers and printers and binders at work upon its embodiment

immediately. There was but one difficulty: "Who, then, would buy?" In his shop he had so many dreams to sell. Prudence counselled that he should add no more for the present. "For," he said, "it is a melancholy fact that your tourist, particularly your cyclist, on whom we should chiefly rely, never reads anything — either at home or abroad. Your bookish pedestrian is extinct, or only survives in numbers too small to carry off even the most limited edition."

Personally, I think the publisher was too pessimistic, though I confess that two or three booksellers I likewise consulted confirmed his view. One of these, something of a philosopher, with an eye for the causes of things, suggested a possible reason. "It comes a good deal," he said, "of some of you literary men, so to say, fouling your own nests. It was Stevenson who began it with his talk of longing for a more manly way of life — as if he could have been happy for five minutes in a world without words. Then Mr. Lang,

perhaps the most literary temperament that ever lived, would have you believe that to write a good book is nothing compared with playing a good game of golf. And, of course, all the imitative youngsters follow suit. It is a pose, a fashion, like any other, and it will pass; but, meanwhile, it is not very good for the book trade."

There is a great deal in what the bookseller said. At the moment, books are at considerably more than a threepence in the shilling discount. Only battle-axes are at a premium. "Life is more than literature," like many another good phrase gone wrong, has run amok in certain brains; and we have the strange spectacle of a highly organised civilisation aping the barbarism from which it started.

"Life"? Yes! But it seems rather the taking of life that is meant; and if life is more than literature, how much more is it than mere golf and cricket, or even soldiering and sailoring? No one would deny that the "crowded hour of

glorious life" is worth all libraries, including even my Knapsack Library, though perhaps it depends a little on what you crowd into that hour; and I fancy that Scott must have meant something more than, say, a good time with a Gatling gun.

Of course, a book is no more a substitute for *life* than a fiddle is a substitute for a beautiful woman; but a book is more important than a cricket bat, and a fiddle than a sword. Similarly, had I to choose between the lark and Shelley, I would choose the bird with the bigger brain and the many meanings in his voice.

Fortunately, however, no such choice is necessary, and I confess that, as a matter of personal practice, when the lark begins over the down, I shut my Shelley. One poet at a time. (On the other hand, I prefer Izaak Walton always to fishing.) I have mentioned Shelley advisedly, as representative of one of the two types into which true knapsack writers are

divided. True knapsack literature either fulfils Walter Pater's ideal of literature in approaching as near as possible to music, or it is like the smoking of a pipe. For us to take it away with us, a book must either be a song or a companion. Shelley is not much — or, perhaps, too much — of a companion; but who shall match him at a song? While for a thoroughly seasoned briar, who is there still that can compare with Charles Lamb?

But, before I steal bits from my unwritten preface to "The Knapsack Library," I realise that I have not quite finished the vindication of that library's existence. Says your plain athletic man — there is no such sentimentalist — "With all this glorious nature about you, this blue air, this green grass, these variously coloured cows; this haughty exercise of prize muscles: what do you want with books? Are not these enough? Leave your bookishness in your London chambers, dear bookworm, and come eat with us the simple grass, like Nebuchadnezzar."

"Bookishness"! I never talked of that. I am no bookworm; nor, indeed, any book-feeding insect, unless it be a book-butterfly happy in the sun of literature. Nor did I for a moment mean that one should read *while* rowing, or cycling; nor would I advise it during football, or cricket — though in the latter game it might, perhaps, be recommended to "stonewallers," as a pleasant way of passing the time — (it would be delightful to watch the effect of an Australian cricketer reading Marcus Aurelius at Lord's).

In fact, however it may sound, my Knapsack Library is not necessarily intended for reading at all; for, more than likely, it would be composed of the books one knows by heart. In book-love, as in any other form of love, there is a physical as well as a spiritual. I know, say, pretty well all I care to read of Mr. Swinburne by heart — the reader must excuse my thus bragging a prodigious memory — but was that any reason why I should n't carry for the last fortnight in a cruel sad-

dlebag "Faustine," and "Felise," and "Dolores," and fifty more imperishable shapes of music? It is not enough to say a poem you love, you must see, even touch it too. You want it with you in its bodily presence, that at evening you may place it on your dinner-table, as you would set a rose in a glass; or that at morning it may be a lark at your bedside. You pack it among your clothes for lavender. There is, perhaps, hardly a purpose to which a real book may not be put — including reading.

Those who aver that nature — *plus* boating — is enough holiday, and that books are an effeminate intrusion, talk as though one expected them to take Mommsen in their travelling bags, and it is difficult to persuade them that our sixpenny Ouida (and what a boon is that!) is not one of the Fathers in disguise. They know so little of the secondary, or rather primary, uses of books. All books to them are either guide-books, or lexicons, or — Whyte-Melville. They either

teach you something dull, or miserably pass the time in the intervals of grouse-shooting. The only book they can see in a man's hand on a holiday is a Bradshaw — a book one is always glad to lend to a friend. If you took a fiddle with you on your wanderings, or if you ran the terrible risk of taking a friend, they would understand easily enough. Well, they must be kind enough to try and comprehend that the book one takes on a journey is at once a fiddle, a friend, and a flower, and, last of all, a book. There is so little room in a knapsack that you are obliged to be thus epigrammatic in your baggage. Probably, if I were a great singer — a Correze, for I am just deep in love with a sixpenny "Moths" — I might not take a book with me; for, apart from the psychological fact that great singers never read anything, I should be able to shape for myself my itinerant feelings in the presence of the various well-known phenomena of nature; but, as I am neither a singer, nor even a "word-

painter," I am driven to express myself at secondhand in all the irrelevant splendours of literature. Sometimes, as I coast down a hill, I chant out in a rapture of speed something may be from Mr. Lang's "Theocritus." As I dodge the affrighted occupants of a wagonette, I am probably exclaiming (genuinely, it will be observed, "from memory"): "Men call thee a gipsy, gracious Bombyca, and lean and sunburnt; it is only I that call thee honey-pale. Swart is the violet, and swart the lettered hyacinth. Yet are these flowers chosen the first in garlands."

Uphill, I have found this verse from a great living poet no less useful (again I quote from memory, but this time, I suspect, more accurately):

"You with shelly horns, rams! and promontory goats,
You whose browsing beards dip in coldest dew!
Bulls, that walk the pastures in kingly-flashing coats!
Laurel, ivy, vine, wreathed for feasts not few!
You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent:

He has been our fellow, the morning of our days!
Us he chose for housemates, and this way went.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure."

This learned metre is not a fortunate choice for hill-riding, as you need almost as much breath for its properly decorative pauses as for mounting the hill. No doubt some sufficiently solemn man of science would be able to trace the exact correspondence between the metre and the hill. "Tell me the poem you quoted," he might say, "and I will tell you the length of the hill, the rate you mounted, and the point at which you decided to continue the poem — but not the hill."

It will be observed, as I have endeavoured to point out, that these merely accidental, but on that account all the more typical, quotations have absolutely nothing to do with the matter in hand. That very fact vouches for their sincerity as quotations. Had they been *à propos*

you might have suspected them. It is their very irrelevance which stamps them as jetting up from the deep rock-springs of human joy; and they may serve as an illustration of the place of books on pilgrimage. I suspect that the inspired reading (or remembering — the same thing!) of books is much the same as the creation of them. Inspiration of any sort is seldom relevant to the moment. Because you love one place with all your heart you must go to another to express it. The adjustment in these matters is something much subtler than external correspondence; it is merely one key of emotion crying out for a companion in the same key. That companion may talk any language, or celebrate something quite different from that which excites the first emotion; all that matters is to strike a similar note of true feeling.

Emotion of any sort does not crave the scientific expression of itself; the expression of the diametrically opposed emotion will serve its turn, if only the expression

be spirited or splendid or tender as itself. Words caught in the passionate rhythm of any feeling are such wonderful things. Feeling of any kind seizes upon any instrument to express itself. Death will sometimes play the guitar and love the piano, while war of late has been satisfied with the banjo. In short, one reads or sings a favourite book *en voyage*, as better educated people hum "My girl is a high-born lady," or some such wayward lyrical expression of thankfulness for the gift of life. It is n't "bookishness" at all; it is only another form of concertina.

Joy often expresses itself in the saddest songs — in fact, it revels in them. We don't write love-letters in the presence of the beloved. Similarly, we don't necessarily read Richard Jefferies to Nature's face. Nature would become self-conscious on the instant. She loves to be worshipped, but she hates to be inspected. Books on the country are best read in town — though Nature does not object to

a gracefully-made quotation from the poets. They are never too personal.

And, of course, books on a journey do not only provide us with that verbal outlet for feeling which man, being unhappy as an enforced dumb animal, is always craving, but they do often enhance for us the charm of natural things. "Nature," indeed, is largely the creation of the poets. If the sea had not been already created, it is certain that Mr. Swinburne would have created it; and no one can read Mr. Meredith's nature-poetry without gaining a deepened intimacy with the earth and a keener zest in his intercourse with her. The beauty of the earth is the result of a long series of discoveries, and the discoveries are always being made. Indeed, the paradoxical position of those who would banish books from our holidays is seen when one realises that nothing is so saturated with literature as what we call "Nature."

But it is most, perhaps, for their sense of unexacting companionship that books

are well taken on a journey. As the companionship of old friends is but little dependent on talk, and is far more an intercourse of the wireless telegraphy of silence, so with books. When we wish them to talk, they talk, just as long or short a time as we please; but, for the most part, we take them along with us as imaginative presences, symbols of fair natures in whose atmosphere we delight to move.

CHAPTER X

APPROACHING STONEHENGE

Trees as a form of lordliness — The green waiting-room at Wilton — A poem by the roadside — A verminous conversation — First sight of Stonehenge.

THE Earls of Pembroke have well understood that the art of lordliness as expressed in one's dwelling-place — or dwelling palace — is mainly an affair of trees. It matters little whether your house be large or small, beautiful or ugly, so long as you surround it with lofty vestibules of green leaves. The largest avenue of obsequious servants is nothing like so impressive as a hundred elms deferentially drawn up on each side of your carriage drive, and at Wilton, from whichever of the four winds you approach, you must pass through long lanes of these giant footmen. Any one who possesses a garden with a single old tree

in it will know what a feeling of distinction it is in the power of one old tree to confer, and can thus form an idea how very distinguished one must feel when one possesses a whole park full, or even whole parks full, like the Earl of Pembroke for example, though, indeed, the avenues to Wilton are evidently of comparatively recent growth. Yes, it is the trees and the old Italian garden that make Wilton, even more than its history or those "art treasures," among which the British public wanders, with all the pathos of irrelevance, on Wednesdays from ten to four. But, of course, the Van Dycks, the Holbeins, the Durers, the Poussins and the Reynoldses help — not to speak of the Greek and Roman sculptures. They help at least in lessening that saddening sense of rather foolish disproportion with which all such instances of the magnificent housing of our mortality must inspire the meditative mind. What human being is great enough to be equal to all this pomp of approach? Avenues so stately as these

must surely be leading us to some throned wonder of humanity, such as man has seldom looked upon. Wise, therefore, is the man who evades the ordeal, and sets a Van Dyck or a Reynolds in his place, feigning that this is not so much his house, as a temple of the arts in his keeping. The avenues thereupon assume a fitness; for, while humanity itself is insignificant, its works are filled with a strange majesty.

Of course, I know that there is another view to be taken, and I myself am as likely as not to take it to-morrow. Once walking with a friend through the grandiose rooms of a certain great London house, I noticed how his form grew more erect, how his eyes brightened and his whole mien took on an added largeness and dignity. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "this is how a gentleman should live!" The spirit within him seemed to expand to its true proportions, — proportions usually cramped and confined within the narrow conditions of a literary life. But, then, his was a great, ambitious spirit. It had

a real need of all this space and air. The human soul may sometimes be so great that its incarnation may not ridiculously inhabit rooms vast as cathedrals, and sit enthroned in the centre of avenues even more imperial than the Earl of Pembroke's. Such human souls, however, seldom find themselves so splendidly provided for; and, therefore, it is as well to have a few Van Dycks and Reynoldses to fill their places.

As you leave Wilton House, and come out upon the high road, you find yourself at four cross-roads, or rather cross-avenues. That to your right has brought you from Salisbury. That immediately facing you, and climbing a long steep hill, will take you to Stonehenge. You have the trees with you, a charming tunnel of green, for nearly a mile, when you come to the Devizes road, which you must cross — but, meanwhile, the seats thoughtfully provided for you while you wait to see the Earl, may have tempted you to sit awhile and listen to the chatter of the leaves, and the hot singing of noon. Besides, it is a

pleasant place to take one's lunch in, though I was a little uncertain whether it was quite good manners to eat chocolate and biscuits in the antechamber of an earl. However, I was very careful with the crumbs, and I left no paper bags lying about. One other kindness to visitors I must note. To disperse the ennui of waiting, the avenue is provided with the weekly papers. At least so I assumed from the fact of a clean copy of the current "Athenæum" lying ready for me upon one of the seats. It proved no inconsiderable kindness to me, for therein I found quoted a little poem which, indeed, I had known before, but which I was glad now to learn beyond possibility of forgetting:—

"Pale brow, still hands, and dim hair,
I had a beautiful friend,
And I dreamed that the old despair
Would end in love in the end.
She looked in my heart to-day,
And found your image there—
She has gone weeping away."

This was my beautiful companion, as I laid down the "Athenæum" where I had found it — from the absence of papers on the other seats I feared that all the Earl of Pembroke's visitors were not so scrupulous — and continued my way to Stonehenge. After you cross the Devizes road, your way suddenly becomes a quarter of a mile of gravelly field-track down the side of a sharp curve of down, which, if you are not careful, may, literally, precipitate you on to the main road between Salisbury and Stonehenge, thus deviously caught up at the bottom of the hill. Thence your way and the Avon's are one for some pleasant miles, and even the great Stratford Avon itself could not be a fresher, greener companion. Charming, too, are the little villages that sit with their feet in the stream all the way along, their long gardens running down to the river on land which has the look of fat alluvial soil. The villagers seem to be great bee-keepers, and wherever the stream brims it nourishes an unusual plenty of

water plants, and reflects uncommonly rich masses of great trees.

The trees are particularly fine as you near a little village just on the border of the Stonehenge plain, called Lake. The cyclist may know of his approaching Lake by a danger-board at the top of a steep wooded lane, — a danger-board which for once he will do well to regard, for it means a sudden right angle of stone wall, the wall dividing the road from a fine old Jacobean house hidden away at the bottom of a well of dark trees — Lake House. Just past Lake House, you turn sharply to the left down a lane which begins with a cluster of farm buildings. On the door of one of the barns or stables you will notice the mouldering heads and feet of various small criminals — foxes, stoats and moles. So the head of a traitor once grinned at you from Temple Bar.

A big, black-bearded countryman, whose kind eyes relieved the sternness of his grim beard, was busy with some hay in one of the sheds, and a young man, his

son, as it presently transpired, was putting his whole soul into the cleaning of some harness, which pleasantly jingled as he rubbed, purring to himself the while, after the manner of men who rub down horses. I remember an old ostler at Stratford who purred away while he cleaned my bicycle, just as though it had been a thoroughbred. So a sailor "ye-ho's" as he pulls a rope, but sailors and ostlers seem to be the only workers who absolutely need a vocal accompaniment to their work. Of course, housemaids sing while they "sweep a room as for God's laws;" and many other workers whistle and sing over their work — is it, one wonders, for joy in it, or simply to keep up their sad hearts? But, so far as I know, it is only in the case of sailors and ostlers that the work and its accompaniment are one. So some people unfamiliar with pens and ink must put out their tongues while they write. I don't think an ostler or a sailor could do his work at all if he were forbidden to make his own peculiar noises while doing it.

Well, black-beard and his son looked up as I entered the lane, and I thought I would take the opportunity of satisfying an old curiosity about those poor mouldering heads and feet on the barn-door. No doubt anthropologists would tell us that they represent the relic of ancient sacrifices to dark earth deities, or perhaps were once offerings of ingratiation to the gods who preside over barns and stables, — the gods who keep the rats from the corn, and watch over the new-born foal. These theories I did not mention to my two friends, though I did hazard one which I had often heard, that those small offenders were thus gibbeted for the same reason that highwaymen once dangled in chains at the cross-roads, — *pour encourager les autres.* This theory raised a smile, as at an outworn superstition, upon the faces of my countryman and his son. Yet the son was inclined to believe, he said, that if you tarred a rat and let it run loose among its friends and relations, it created an excellent effect. But, that apart, he

would explain my sacrifice to dark earth deities on more immediately practical grounds. These animals were thus nailed up, not in the least as tradesmen nail bad half-crowns to their counters, or for any such monitory or symbolic reason, but entirely for the purpose of simple enumeration. As once in an earlier England a price was set upon the heads of wolves, so in present-day England a price is set upon the tails of rats. You come to the farmer and say, "I have slain so many rats, or so many stoats"; and the farmer says, "Where are they?" Then you proudly take him to the barn-door and point to your victims neatly nailed in rows, and making something of a grisly decorative scheme. Then the farmer pays.

Weasels and stoats bring twopence a piece, rats "a penny a tail" if caught up in the fields, and twopence if caught in "a gin" down in the valley, near the stacks and barns.

"A gin," I asked, momentarily forget-

ting my Omar, "what is that?" and then almost immediately my mind began,

"O thou who didst with pitfall and with gin . . ."

and "Oh, of course, you mean a trap. I remember," I said. A knowledge of poetry is thus occasionally elucidative of actual life.

Moles likewise bring a penny a tail, and then, in their case, there are the coats to think of, to avoid spoiling which special mole-traps are used. All this I felt was really valuable information, and I learnt, too, that the difference between a stoat and a weasel lay in a white spot upon the stoat's tail. In another county I have found that sparrow's eggs are a similar lucrative source of income. One farmer of my acquaintance gives a penny a dozen for them, and has paid over a pound this year to village boys for such blood-money — which means something like three thousand sparrows less in the world. If Lesbia made her little eyes so red over the death of one sparrow, surely he heart

would have broken at such a wholesale slaughter. I have seldom seen two happier, brighter people than that countryman and his son, and I should surmise that no master has two better servants. To see people doing their duty briskly, evidently loving it, and finding in its round a complete world according to their liking, is a rare sight to-day, and is perhaps likely to become rarer. The pride that lad took in making the bit he was polishing shine like silver was good to see, and as the bit brightened his intelligent face seemed to brighten too. A human being harmoniously adjusted to his place and work in the world! Naturally he was happy, for it was impossible not to reflect that he owed no little of his happiness to having been born into one of those traditional employments which are so close to nature as almost to be counted among her operations, and are, therefore, little disturbed by the fashions of human change. There are so many modern duties that it is impossible, and would be unnatural,

even wicked, to do with gladness; but from these your man born to the beautiful care of horses is saved, placed beyond hearing of those

"storms that rage
"Outside" his "happy ground."

When, as not always happens, a countryman is nice, he is "very, very nice;" so I left my two friends — as I feel I may call them — with a warm sense of having felt at home in the world for a few moments, no doubt an illusion created by contact with their harmony. I hope I left them no disease of the soul in exchange.

On parting from them they had warned me not to make a common mistake of wayfarers, — that of continuing the road straight on; but that, as soon as the open plain began on the right, I was to strike out boldly across the grass. Something of this I remembered from a former time — an earlier life it seemed to be; for this was to be my third visit to Stonehenge. It is evident that I was not born to be a great traveller, for the reader of this itin-

erary may have observed that I have spent most of my time in the delicate pleasure of revisiting places visited before. It is to take one's pleasures sadly, I admit; yet the sad music that lives in the wind blowing about half-forgotten places of our pilgrimage is sweet to hear. It is like the waving of harebells in a lonely field. Besides, there are classics among places, to which we naturally return, not merely from egoistic sentiment, but to renew our delight in them. And Stonehenge, I remembered, had given me an unforgettable thrill of mystery, though that stone writing upon the green page of Salisbury Plain was in a language I could not read. But the shape of the letters alone had fascinated me — and, indeed, it is not merely fanciful to say that at a distance Stonehenge is not unlike a Hebrew inscription written in stone.

CHAPTER XI

AVOIDING STONEHENGE

The silence of Salisbury plain — Stonehenge for sale! — Amesbury: Guinivere, John Gay, Sir Edmund Antrobus — An incompetent inn — Pewsey.

WHEN you leave the road and go delicately upon the velvet of the grassy wilderness, following the track of waggonette wheels over the turf, it is surprising how soon the solitude takes hold of you. A few yards back and you were talking with your kind, but already you feel as if you have been alone for a week — which, I imagine, is about as long as any natural human being out of his Byronic teens can support solitude. Nothing but grass and sky, and the cracked tinkle of sheep-bells. Yes, here and there a clump of lonely pines, and even a farmhouse strangely set in the

waste. But a farmhouse without a sign of life, not a face at the windows, not a sound in the yard. It is as though the great surrounding silence has strangled this interruption in its midst. If one went up the garden path and opened the house door, I am sure one would find its inmates sitting with finger on lip, pillars of enchanted silence. The silence of Salisbury Plain has washed over them, and drowned the living speech in their throats. All who live long with nature become more or less Trappists in time, and Salisbury Plain insists as much upon silence, as if it were the British Museum Reading Room.

For something over a mile the ground has been gradually rising. Presently, to right and left of the track, tumuli begin to hump the skyline, like backs of whales in the green sea of down; and, if you have been to Stonehenge before, you know that very soon, directly over the mounting track, the architrave of the tallest "trilithon" — there seems to be no

other word — yet a mile distant, will solemnly rise against the sky. I watched for this moment with a curious suspense. Why, I cannot at all say — except that the effect is perhaps uniquely solemn. Those who have seen it for themselves will understand — unless, indeed, they went with a party. For society of any sort, except perhaps that of one very near and quiet friend, is fatal to such moments either at Stonehenge or elsewhere. Parties always beget the funny man — out of sheer cowardice. I don't mean the heaven-born droll with real comic gifts, but the funny man spontaneously generated of the occasion, probably the most serious member of the party turned buffoon from a nervous sense of social inadequacy. Waggonette parties are the bane of Stonehenge. To avoid them you must be up with the dawn, or you must wait for the evening shadows. Unfortunately, I had stumbled upon the early afternoon, and long before I reached the stones I could see that they were ringed with a cordon of wag-

gonettes and flecked with the light foam of summer blouses. No! I could n't see Stonehenge so; and, therefore, I turned off just short of them, and took the steep white hill to Amesbury, once Guinivere's shelter from the wrath of Arthur, later the retreat of Gay, now the home of Sir Edmund Antrobus — who bids fair to divide the honours of iconoclasm with the Reverend Francis Gastrell, with whom I do not forget that on a previous page I acknowledged some sympathy. Gastrell, it will be remembered, razed Shakespeare's New Place to the ground because he was so pestered with pious callers. He might, one thinks, have quietly changed his residence instead, as, indeed, the proper indignation of Stratford summarily compelled him to do. Yet the truth remains that those pious callers must have proved a terrible burden, and to lease a house in the hope of a quiet life only to find that, involuntarily, one has become a hard-working custodian, expected to submit to all interruptions of domestic

felicity with a smile, and to answer every stupid enquiry with eagerness, must have been a severe trial to human patience. But the honour, says some one, of living in the house where the very air seems yet to thrill with the sublime echo of immortal words! Ah, well, Francis Gastrell did n't see the matter in that sentimental excursionist light. Perhaps, for all we know, he was longing for a quiet hour in which to study that very "bard" in whose house mistakenly enough he had made his home. Indeed, it is just possible that he had begun with sentiment too, and thought: "How charming it would be to study 'Hamlet' in the very house where it was written?" (for Shakespearean chronology had not advanced very far in his day)—who knows? Then the irony of realising that he could n't find a moment to read Shakespeare—from the very fact of his living in Shakespeare's house! The frenzy induced by this curious paradox of circumstance may well account for, though it cannot excuse, the mad act which has

made his name an execration — wherever it is known.

But Sir Edmund Antrobus is not so provokingly circumstanced. He does not live in Stonehenge. His one hardship, it would appear, is to have been born to a national distinction without having been given the necessary taste to appreciate it. This is a hardship common to many of the nobility, for which insufficient sympathy has been shown. I venture to claim sympathy with a young aristocrat who wishes to convert antiquity into racehorses. In his familiar conversation Sir Edmund Antrobus probably alludes to Stonehenge with much *ennui* of manner. Really, it does n't interest him. He does n't know what the devil it is all about. But he does know that there may be money in it. Mysteriously enough it is an object of national sentiment, and for national sentiment a nation is usually prepared to pay. Strange as it may seem, that absurd group of weather-beaten stones is worth something like its

weight in gold. One has only to threaten the Government with a rich American, and the price might be raised indefinitely.

That there are some possessions that put their possessors peculiarly upon their honour, which, received by an accident of birth from dead hands that have understood reverently to guard them, to be passed on faithfully to a reverent future, are held less in absolute right than in trust for a whole people, nay, a whole world; that it is better to face comparative indigence than to break one's faith with the past and the future in such a trust; that one's poor little name and one's poor little life are really magnified for a moment by this fantastic possession: such considerations as these seem never to have occurred to the present possessor of Stonehenge.

As for that awful American, whom popular fancy seems to picture as a gigantic eagle circling round the sacred stones, and threatening to carry them across the Atlantic at the sound of an auctioneer's hammer, personally I have too much

respect for the American amateur greatly to fear him in this matter. The American has too true a sentiment for English monuments which he rightly regards as his own, to contemplate such a desecration of one of those places of pilgrimage where his due feet never fail on his English visits. Average American sentiment and taste in these matters is, to say the least, quite the equal of ours; and, apart from any question of desecration, the American would be dull indeed who did not see that to remove Stonehenge would be the absolute destruction of it, however carefully the stones were numbered, or placed after their original position. The moment the stones are disturbed their virtue has gone out of them. There is nothing in the antiquity of the stone itself to invite a purchaser. Stone as old can be hewn in any quarry. It is, of course, in its setting, its historical, or rather prehistorical, *entourage*, that the significance of Stonehenge lies. Only when an American can pick up England out of

the water and set her down entire, say, in Lake Michigan, will he gain any satisfaction in having brought Stonehenge to America. Meanwhile, the American who would transplant that stone flower would find it wither in his hand. Let the case of Temple Bar be a warning to any such impossible purchaser of Stonehenge. It is true that the stones were "numbered" and that the whole thing looks like Temple Bar, but does any one really feel that it is Temple Bar any longer? For all its sense of antiquity it might as well be in Madame Tussaud's.

I had hoped that at Amesbury there might still remain some stones of the cloister where Guinivere and Arthur saw each other for the last time, as one pictures them from Tennyson's striking, but almost inhuman, idyll, or as, in some respects, one may prefer to picture them in the swift lightning flash in which a young poet of our own day has caught the gestures of their agony.

I had too a picture in my mind of the

Princess Mary, daughter of Edward I., retiring into the same cloister, "carrying with her a train of thirteen noble young ladies," a picture, I will confess, derived from that fascinating book, "Kelly's Directory" — in which, seriously speaking, the historical sketches of each town and village are admirably done. You can never be quite dull in an inn which subscribes to "Kelly's Directory."

Here again one had to reckon with Sir Edmund Antrobus — for "Amesbury Abbey" is the name of his seat, though, according to village information, nothing of the old abbey remains. The chief show-object of the place seemed to be "The Diamond Lawn" at Amesbury Abbey, in a "cave" in the centre of which Gay is said to have written "The Beggar's Opera," while on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. As I care little for diamonds, and perhaps less for Gay, I made no attempt to see "the Diamond Lawn." It is curious to note that those poets, namely, our poets of the eighteenth

century, who had least of the sacred fire, loved most to affect the divine fury, and to surround themselves with the picturesque paraphernalia of inspiration. Gay with this "cave" of his, Shenstone, with his "grottoes," naturally belonged to an age which built sham ruins in its gardens, and affected the stucco academe. No age has taken more pains to seem "poetical" and been in reality so prosaic; and such stucco monuments of its sham romanticism as survive deject one like the rain-ruined "bowers" of its old pleasure gardens. Can one imagine anything more sillily sad than the frivolous debris of Vauxhall? Thus there was nothing to detain one in Amesbury, though actually I found myself chafingly detained at a slovenly inn where it took half-an-hour to make a cup of tea, and where no one seemed to know anything you asked. It is remarkable how bad or good management make themselves subtly felt the moment you enter an inn. The brisk atmosphere of competence seems to brace

and gladden you on the very threshold, and you are aware no less soon of the sluggardly management, with its stale, unaired, undusted rooms, and its draggle-tail attendance.

I wished to know the way to Pewsey. Though, as I afterwards found, a signpost at the village end made it as clear as a road could be, no one in the inn seemed ever to have heard of such a place. They referred me to the saddler opposite, a large, intelligent-looking man, who seemed to be the village encyclopedia. I could see that he knew a good many other things worth knowing besides the way to Pewsey, but that was the only portion of his knowledge of which I was able to avail myself at the moment. Next time I am passing I propose calling in to make further acquaintance with that wise head.

Pewsey is one of those places in which one is interested solely on account of some other place beyond them. So we are all once or twice in our lives interested in Clapham Junction, or Rugby, or Crewe.

It is difficult to think of any one making a permanent home in places which we associate with wildly procured refreshments. One might as well live in a signal-box. To loom so large in railway guides, yet to mean so little to the human heart; a pandemonium of porters, a mere clearing-house of humanity! It is a contumelious dignity, an aldermanic knighthood.

Pewsey, of course, is only a very minor Crewe. Probably no one has ever thought of it before as a form of Clapham Junction. It is probably only I who so think of a remote village, remote from the shunting of engines and the visible scream of electric signals, where the brain of man is peacefully grass-grown, and his heart is wisely content with the contentments of old time. To me only, I say, it was a junction — a conjunction, no passionate verb of power like Winchester, no immortal past participle like Stratford-on-Avon. It was to lead me to Avebury in Wiltshire. That was its one and only significance. Yet, so strange are the vagaries

of human destiny, that who knows but some day Pewsey may suddenly become for me the very centre of the universe, the capital of dreams. A face at a window, a voice from heaven, and how differently I had written of Pewsey. Or, some day a letter may come with the Pewsey post-mark that shall change the whole course of my life. Who knows!

CHAPTER XII

AVEBURY, AN OLDER STONEHENGE

Fantastic archæology — Sunset and old stones — An unwise Omarian — Walking the vallum — Moonrise, or Astarte.

THE law of fame is no less capricious applied to places than to individuals. Stonehenge is one of the common wonders of England, but how many know anything of Avebury? Yet in many respects it is more interesting than Stonehenge, and, though it lacks in concentrated picturesqueness, it has considerable picturesqueness too, and is, I think, more suggestive to the imagination. Those who know, or rather make it their business to guess, regard Stonehenge as a mushroom growth by the side of Avebury — quite late Perpendicular. While Stonehenge was still untamed boulder in that strange valley of stones two miles east of Avebury, from which both Stonehenge

and Avebury were brought, Avebury had long been a flourishing cathedral; and, from hints that still remain of its largeness of design, it is evident that Stonehenge as compared with it, in the matter of size, was a mere lady-chapel. Still, it is surmised that fortune favoured Stonehenge from the beginning, and that it early became fashionable, while Avebury steadily declined in patronage: a rivalry of Æschylus and Sophocles in stone. It has been advanced by one of those delightful old writers who write so airily of "the Belgæ," that those mysterious leaders of fashion in this island built Stonehenge deliberately as a rival to Avebury, "leaving the latter to the Celts;" and, at all events, the learned and delicious Dr. Stukeley had little hesitation in fixing the date of Avebury as 1859 B. C.—"the year of the death of Sarah, Abraham's wife"!—which is almost as delightful as "leaving the latter to the Celts."

To realise the splendid audacity of such theorising one has to visit these stones,

and wonder that any one has even dared to suggest their original design, not to speak of a date. Of course, any one can see that they have not been aimlessly placed where they are — but great indeed was the courage that dared be so sure of that aim as to draw out a ground plan, with its avenues and inner and outer circles, and nicely to decide on the original number of stones.

One's first impression as one turns off the Bath and Marlborough road, — for Avebury is situated in North Wilts, about six miles west of Marlborough, — strikes the note of surprise and contrast which is the secret of that imaginative suggestiveness of which I have spoken. Probably one had expected a lonely circle of stones in the midst of a waste, after the manner of Stonehenge. At all events, I had. However, one gradually realises as one rides the two or three miles of excellent turnpike which joins Avebury to the Queen's highway that the effect is to be something different. On either side of the stone

walls which line the road the fields are under cultivation. You wait in vain for the appearance of the lonely waste. Field follows field, and then suddenly on the right, the wall built round it, rises up a great broad-shouldered, boulder-shaped stone, perhaps six feet high, suggesting some accident of nature rather than the design of man. But a moment after, appears another similarly shaped and placed on the left of the road. Then, a few yards further on, in a field to the left, one comes, with a pre-historic thrill — if you know what that is — upon six very large fallen stones lying flat, parallel with the road, in two rows of three stones each; the further row supplemented by a seventh still standing upright. Evidently this is the beginning of Avebury, and evidently cultivation has laid its hand upon it, and you must not expect to see it in picturesque uninterruptedness, but pick it out here and there amid fields and farms. That you will soon realise is its unique charm. Suddenly, as you still follow the turnpike,

two grassy ramparts partly masked with trees rise on each side of the road, and you note that they seem like the beginning of a circular wall of green mounds, through which the hedge-rowed turnpike has been cut. Immediately inside to the right you catch a glimpse through the edge of some very large stones standing in a field with a certain suggestion of design. Then orchards and houses, and then the road, its day's work done, canters briskly out into an open space of houses clustering about a pleasant village inn. Avebury village, with its inn and its church, its cottages and its farms, has made a warm nest for itself right inside the old temple; and the grass-grown vallum, with its deep inner moat, which we had noted on entering, enfolds the little place with a snug circle of green. So one comes upon some old farmhouses that once were nunneries, and trace shreds of sacred architecture among the stables and the byres. This is the charm of contrast of which I spoke, a contrast which, as will be easily under-

stood, does much to deepen the almost frightening sense of antiquity with which those shrouded mounds and those terrible grey old stones, standing ghost-like at odd corners of field and farmyard, impress one.

Sunset was rapidly turning to twilight as I entered the village, and the dreamy light made the place more haunted still.

Ordering my dinner at the inn, for I had decided to stay the night there, I hastened to make the round of the village before the twilight turned to darkness. An oldish dilapidated fellow, whose face and speech too plainly proclaimed him one of the unwise disciples of the wise Omar, brushed aside for a moment the dream of drink and hastened after me to show the stones. I think it is well for him that Avebury is so little known, and I fear I may be doing him no true service in writing this article. Though, indeed, it matters little now. The thing is gone so far with him, that he may well be left to enjoy the palsied remnant of his life in his own way. He lives in my recollec-

tion chiefly by a word he used in giving me directions how to make the circuit of the old vallum. The village, I should say, is cut through north, south, east and west, by intersecting highways, and is thus shaped roughly like a cross bounded by a circle. The inn stands about the centre of the cross. The road to Swindon, a few yards beyond it on the left, makes the northern arm of the cross, and within that and the eastern arm lies a farm with some meadows bounded by a segment of the vallum. One does need some one like that old Omarian to show one the beginning of the way. Else I would not have thought of boldly opening a private door set in the high wall of the farmyard on the other side of the Swindon road. Nerved to this trespass, however, by my companion's assurance, I opened this door and found myself amid the litter of a farmyard. "There is one of the stones," said my guide, as we entered, and looking to the right I saw the usual farmyard cesspool, the bethesda of ducks and pigs,

dammed at one end by one of the huge stones fallen on its side. A little further, on the left, was a row of cottages, where I supposed the farm hands lived, and standing upright, some twenty feet high, I should say, within about a yard of the gable-end of the last cottage, was another mighty stone. Then came the open meadow, where there were several other stones, all very large, standing about. One had only to cross this meadow, and one had reached the vallum. Here the unwise Omar paused and explained how I could walk the whole. At each point where the high-road cuts through, the vallum ended, he explained, in a little "trim-tram" wicket. One passed through this, crossed the high-road, opened the "trim-tram" wicket on the other side, and so walked the next quarter of the circle. It seemed fairly easy, so I undertook the adventure —saying to myself: "a little 'trim-tram' wicket." And that is the odd phrase by which I recall a battered old country face, darkened with the melancholy of the

drunkard. I suppose "trim-tram" will be found readily enough in Halliwell's dictionary of archaisms and provincialisms. But to me, at all events, it was new and took my fancy. I count my walk round that old vallum, with its beautiful quietness, its deep ditches filling with shadows, its profound suggestiveness to the imagination, and its little trim-tram wicket, one of my most fascinating experiences. Of course, mood and atmospheric effect together account for most fascinating experiences. It was a very religious sunset, solemn banners and a wide-spreading peace of lovely light. The air was all balm. It was the hour of the making of saints, — the hour when sinners dream of becoming saints, and saints dream of the lives of sinners. The eye revelled in an exquisite simplification of sight. The whole visible world seemed to fall into clear and gracious design. The eye and the soul alike knew with an absolute knowledge, which, like all absolute knowledge — not ignorance — is bliss; for —

"... sometimes on a sudden all seems clear —
Hush! hush! my soul, the Secret draweth near;
Make silence ready for the speech divine —
If Heaven should speak, and there be none to hear!

"Yea! sometimes on the instant all seems plain,
The simple sun could tell us, or the rain;
The world caught dreaming, with a look of Heaven,
Seems on a sudden tip-toe to explain."

(In this matter of quotations, it may be held that charity begins at home!)

Then, as a minor pleasure, there is always a satisfaction in being able clearly to grasp the lie of the land and the situation of a place. On the ridge of Avebury vallum at sunset you are unusually fortunate in the opportunity for such satisfaction: the sweeping wall of down to the north, sloping away into a smooth weald of wide levels and various crops in coloured squares, then little Avebury, like a lark's nest dropped on the plain — a fortified lark's nest, one is at first inclined to theorise: for, surely, you say, this must once have been a sacred village, and this vallum,

with its moat, in some places seventy feet deep from the crest, was evidently a fighting wall, and has "resounded" long ago in the old silence with the "din" of flint weapons of war. The antiquary, however, pertinently points out that, had Avebury vallum been defensive in object, the moat would surely have been placed outside instead of inside. It is as rash theorising in archæology as in philology.

Personally I care nothing at all whether Avebury vallum is sacred or martial in significance. It sufficed me that no place I have come upon in England is so filled with an almost shuddering sense of "the dim grey-grown ages." The gigantic struggles of man to make the world beneath his feet, and scale, with dreams and prayers, the world above his head, has left no more suggestive writing on the soil of England than this Avebury alphabet of terrible stone. Our imaginations are no doubt happy in the lack of detail. Detail would only vulgarise the spiritual reality that lies behind this dumb but

eloquent relic. Bloodshed, and the wringing of hearts, and frightful deities: that is the early history of all religions — and too often the later. The imaginative Dr. Stukeley has attributed the erection of Avebury to the Phœnicians, who — one may think prophetically — came to England in search of tin. Perhaps the surmise is not too ridiculous, for the Phœnicians, with a religious intuition early awake to the dangers of anthropomorphism, are known to have preferred the use of standing stones to that of more realistically human symbols of the deities they worshipped — the good gods and goddesses of the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth, the Rivers, the Meadows, and the Waters. It was a good worship, and if it necessitated an occasional human sacrifice, is not human sacrifice the essence of all religions? The sun, the moon, the earth, the rivers, the meadows, and the waters: Avebury is indeed a fitting temple wherein to worship them, and as, passing through the last little trim-tram wicket, I decided

to take a pew in that church, Astarte, Queen of Heaven, with cow's horns of pearl, appeared to me, like a moth of pale silver, high up above the ancient stones.

The beautiful lines of Lord De Tabley came to my lips, and so I blended my evening prayer with the memory of an honoured friend:—

"Regent of Love and Pain,
Before whose ageless eyes
The nations pass as rain,
And thou abidest, wise,
As dewdrops in a cup
To drink thy children up. . . .

"Divine, whose eye-glance sweet
Is earth and heaven's desire:
Beneath whose pearly feet
The skies irradiate fire,
And the cold cloud-way glows
As some rain-burnished rose.

"Heaven, dumb before thy face
With fear and deep amaze,
Tingles through all its space:
The abyss, with shuddering rays,

Breaks, as in golden tears,
Into a thousand spheres.

"Dim earth disdain not, sweet,
Altho' thine equal throne
Be near Love's council-seat,
And Heaven is all thine own.
What vale with violet crown
Will draw thee, true love, down?

"What earthly highland poised
In cloudy mantle cold,
Where eagles have rejoiced
Among the cliffs of gold,
And rise with icy wings
In the mountain glistenings —

"What foreland fledged with myrrh,
Vocal with myriad bees,
What pine-sequestered spur,
What lone declivities,
Will draw thee to descend,
Creation's cradle-friend? . . .

"Fain would we see thy face,
Mother of many dreams:
Fain would our hands embrace
Thy raiment as it streams.
Thou floatest like a prayer
With incense in thy hair."

CHAPTER XIII

TO LECHLADE AND KELMSCOTT

Beautiful words and beautiful lives — Ugly Swindon — "To Kelmscott" — William Morris's grave — Tea in Kelmscott Garden — Shelley and Lechlade.

WHAT beautiful words are made by beautiful lives — though I suppose there are names of places which no amount of godly or romantic living on the part of immortals can make beautiful: Swindon, for example, through which gate of horn I must perforce pass to meet the Upper Thames. No doubt many noble and useful lives have been lived at Swindon, yet they have hidden no echo of their music in the curt syllables of that inglorious name. A grim junction for green places, a hard and hideous halt in a pleasant pilgrimage, a town to pass through with eyes shut and fingers

in your ears — such is Swindon, for which I seem to have conceived a peculiar spite. Perhaps it comes of my having once opened my eyes as I passed through, and severely wounded them against a public building. I am sure that I only came through Swindon alive by saying "Lechlade and Kelmscott" softly all the way; for it is well known that beautiful words are a sovereign charm against evil spirits. "Lechlade and Kelmscott!" The names seemed to float out of the musical distance, to meet and heal the poor pilgrim, eye-sore and ear-wounded from his passage through Swindon. Thank God, I was safe on the green other side — with the evening bells of two beautiful names sounding ever nearer. "Lechlade and Kelmscott!" Would they have seemed so beautiful, I wondered, had not Shelley filled one with starlight, and William Morris made an orchard of the other? They were beautiful names always, one can see; but it is plain, too, that no beauty of their own

would have made them so very precious to the ear. Mere natural beauty could not have sufficed them. Like women, however literally beautiful, they had to be loved by poets ere they could be robed in that supernatural beauty with which the love of a poet transfigures its object.

Kelmscott! When at last I stood beneath a finger-post which said "To Kelmscott," I stood and looked a long while. It was as though in some green lane I had come upon a finger-post: "To the Moon"—in fact, was not Kelmscott "East of the Sun and West of the Moon"? It is strange how a great man first of all makes a place so real, and then turns it to utter fairyland. Once Kelmscott was an unknown cluster of farms and pigstyes; then it became real with the daylight of contemporary fame; now it is a dream-village, bathed in the moonlight of immortality.

"To Kelmscott!" O my bicycle—wheel very softly thither. And shall we

not wreath us in green boughs, and thus enter the village — very strangely? The villagers would not fear us so, for they have seen many strange and moon-like things at Kelmscott. As in some Italian village once obscure, but suddenly wild with fame because the Madonna has appeared to a goatherd in a great radiance, the peasants are learned in holy things; so at Kelmscott, one might fancy, the very pigs must know somewhat of the ways of poets.

It is a sad, stone village is Kelmscott, — sad with something of the sadness of the stone villages of the Cotswolds. The hard life of the earth seems to have made grim the wintry faces of the buildings, as it makes grim the faces of old farm hands that have feared God for seventy years, yet with just that sweetness which comes of being worn and worn, like old silver. But the good trees try to make the old buildings feel at home in the world. How they nestle and rustle, the thick green leaves around the sad old stone!

But how lovingly, shelteringly, they close around the tiny church, with its one great grave! Grave so great, yet almost hidden away beneath the boundary hedge of the churchyard, — a careless moulderingplace, where no official sexton disturbs the dead with nicely ordered gravel and packets of forget-me-nots, but where the moss creeps stealthily in the night of forgetfulness, and the weeds fearlessly thicken.

Just a sarcophagus of plain stone, with a touch of simple beauty in its shape, and: "William Morris, 1834–1896." Ah, Master — and it is here that you lie a-sleeping. Happily there are feelings that all can understand. All who matter to me will understand what it might perhaps be to stand by the grave of William Morris.

As I stood there, I hardly know why, and with no special reference, I found myself saying to myself some words from one of those beautiful prose romances which were more truly William Morris — "William Morris, 1834–1896" — than

his poetry, some words accidentally held in the tangle of my memory: —

"... and Ralph said: 'How is it with thee, beloved?'
'O well, indeed,' she said.
Quoth he: 'And how tasteth to thee the water of the Well?
Slowly she spake and sleepily: 'It tasted good, and as if thy love were blended in it.'"

And then I turned away from "the Well at the World's End," with a full, sweet heart, gravely glad somehow, and again irrelevantly, and, probably inaccurately, I hummed to myself: —

"I know a little garden close,
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering;"

and thereat I came to the end of the lane, — a cul-de-sac of great trees, with the young Thames just below, lying like a nymph among the reeds — and the grey gables of Kelmscott House, and I sat in

the orchard and took tea with one whom I will not name for very reverence, — the muse of all those memories that came upon me thick as the ripe sun through the twisted apple-boughs. Then I walked through the house he had loved, looked at his books, touched gently the woven works of his hands — and thought of it all: of Rossetti, too, and of all that praying brotherhood of beauty. And so I went away filled with wonder, and not far away from tears.

Then Lechlade spire rose out of the green flatness, and my thoughts turned to that earlier spirit. Poor young spirit, so trapped and trammelled, and yet escaping into such a radiance of song — the purest soul since Christ, the gentlest heart. His face of white fire was somewhere down there among the river rushes, for it was yet afternoon, and he and his friends were busy with one of his glorious absurdities, tugging vainly at the oar against the weeds and shallows of the river. That wonderful Thames voyage! Listen to an old

Garden Front
Kelmscott House

letter. It is from Charles Clairmont to Clare Clairmont, and is dated September 16, 1815. The "we" means "Mary," Peacock, Charles Clairmont, and Shelley.

". . . Having left Oxford, we proceeded onward, and in a day or two to Lechlade, the last town on the river-side, and about fourteen miles from the source of the Thames. We had in the course of our voyage conceived the scheme of not stopping here, but, by going along a canal which here joins the Thames, to get into the Severn, and so also to follow up that river to its source. Shelley even proposed in his wildness, that there should be no halting place even there; he even proposed, by the help of divers canals and rivers, to leave North Wales, and, traversing the inland counties, to reach Durham and the Lakes, so on to the Tweed, and hence to come out on the Forth, nor rest till we reached the Falls of the Clyde, when by the time we returned we should have voyaged two thousand miles. However, all this airy scheme was soon laid aside, for the Commissioner would not allow us to pass the Severn Canal under £20. This was out of the question, so, having satisfied ourselves on these

points, we determined at least to draw our boat up to the very spring of the Thames before we returned. We made a most bold endeavour at this last project, but by the time we got three miles above Lechlade the reeds became so enormously thick and high that all three of us tugging could not move the boat an inch; the water also, a little further on, was so shallow that it barely covered the hoofs of some cows standing in the middle to drink. Quite scared by this sight, we turned round and passed the rest of the day at Lechlade. Next morning at six we commenced our homeward course, and in about four days reached Windsor again, much delighted by our excursion, but heartily tired of its length. We have all felt the good effects of this jaunt, but in Shelley the change is quite remarkable; he has now the ruddy, healthy complexion of the autumn upon his countenance, and he is twice as fat as he used to be."

Shelley had been fired to all this by memories of river navigation on the Reuss and the Rhine, and there is no telling how many times as they tugged upstream, he had chanted his favourite verse from

Southey. As no one quotes "Thalaba" nowadays, one may as well quote it:

> "The little boat moved on,
> Through pleasant banks the quiet stream
> Went winding pleasantly;
> By fragrant fir-groves now it past,
> And now through alder-shores,
> Through green and fertile meadows now
> It silently ran by.
> The flag-flower blossom'd on its side,
> The willow-tresses waved,
> The flowing current furrow'd round
> The water-lily's floating leaf."

But, as we have seen, the little boat did not move on. So the party, happy all the same, had to spend the night at Lechlade, a curiously sad and time-swept old village. It is pleasant to think that Shelley was really happy at Lechlade. It stands in his history for one of his rare perfect hours. In the tumbled cloudland of his life, it is a sweet, unobstructed star. Peacock, with his usual judgment, attributed this serenity to a lapse from Shelley's customary vegetarianism. He

had prescribed "peppered mutton-chops," and Shelley had been unable to resist them. So it came that he wandered so happily about Lechlade churchyard in the starlight, eagerly making an elegy: —

"Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night:
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep."

The Lechlade steeple still dreams of it all at starlight.

CHAPTER XIV

CIRENCESTER AND FAIRFORD

My mysterious interest in Cirencester — Pronunciation of Cirencester — Tesselated pavements, motor-cars and phonographs — An epitaph, stained glass and a sermon.

I CAN offer no explanation of a mysterious life-long desire which I have at length, quite late in life, appeased: the desire to go to Cirencester before I died. Perhaps it is the essence of a real desire that it is irrational. So soon as one has a reason for doing a thing, it is so easy to find a reason for not doing it. Why Cirencester should have so struck my very earliest fancy I have no idea. Now that I have been there, I have even less idea. It is a delightful old place, but no more delightful than many another old place. Yet, all the same, I am conscious of a peaceful sense of fulfilment to which my life was before a stranger. Some

people desire to go to Rome, others by a curious possession of their nerves — which they can no more explain than I my desire to go to Cirencester — find themselves drawn, magnet-like, to the Pole. I have a certain interest in the Pole, because a very noble man whom I was once privileged to shake hands with has left seven toes there — but, apart from that association, the Pole has never had such a siren-call for me as the mere sound of Cirencester (properly mispronounced). I think I must have had an ancestor who loved some one in Cirencester, and who was killed by the up-setting of the stage-coach on the way. Perhaps just outside Fairford, with its famous stained-glass. Maybe it is his unappeased yearning that has all these years haunted my nerves like a ghost — for is not each one of us a haunted house of "heredity"? Two hundred years too late I have ridden into Cirencester, — but the face is no longer waiting at the window. It grew tired of watching, and the bright eyes are long since fast asleep.

Perhaps, again, my real, unconscious reason was a desire to find out by personal intercourse with actual Cirencastrians the absolutely correct way of pronouncing the beautiful name of their native town. Mr. Muirhead's delightful Bædeker for Great Britain (which, after all, is the one book one really needs in one's knapsack, poetry and such nonsense apart) says "pronounced *Cisseter*." Some people say "*Cicester*;" and it was so that Shakespeare evidently pronounced it. "Our town of Cicester in Gloucestershire," says Richard II.; but the townsfolk themselves, feeling the need of living up to the times, assured me that all advanced thinkers, all the progressives of pronunciation, in Cisseter say Cir-en-cester. On the other hand, a lady who spent most of her playhours as a child in the house of Lord Bathurst assures me that one should say "Cisseter." It is only democrats who say Cir-en-cester. Still, the pretty parlour-maid who waited on me at dinner at *The Fleece* was quite sure every one nowadays says Cir-

en-cester; and, seeing her public opportunities for observation, she ought to know. The final result of my investigations is that you pronounce Cirencester, like any other word, just as the person you happen to be with is accustomed to pronounce it.

One more suggestion: perhaps, after all, the most probable explanation of my desire to see Cirencester is to be found in my no less mysterious interest in Roman remains, — tesselated pavements and such like. From my childhood the phrase "tesselated pavement" has been to me as good as cake. Yes, in my heart I know that I went to Cirencester really for the sake of its tesselated pavements. In my boyish imagination the High Street at Cirencester was a beautiful carpet of coloured tesseræ, fitted tiny bit by patient bit into a harmony of minute pieces of marble, like a child's puzzle. When I came to Cirencester I found, however, that the original tesselated High Street of my dream had been taken up and placed

in the museum, the Corinium museum, Cisseter, as Mr. Muirhead tells us, having been "the 'Corinium' of the Romans." There are probably two reasons for this. One I realised, with a certain sense of contrast, as I sat at breakfast in *The Fleece*. It forced itself upon me, for it was an exceedingly able-bodied motor omnibus and carrier's cart combined which had stopped outside the inn to take a brown-paper parcel to Fairford, eight miles away. Evidently the people in Cisseter are tired of being Ancient Romans — and having made up their minds to run one of the most impressive motor-cars I have seen (quite as big as two of Messrs. W. H. Smith and Sons linked together) they naturally decided to take up the tesselated High Street. To continue both was impossible. Besides, the past is rather in the way of a market-town which has its current eggs and butter to think of. Therefore, Cirencester made up its mind to put as much as possible of its past into the museum,

and get a motor-car; *and* — oh yes! I must not forget that — a penny phonograph, which, when the motor-car had thundered off, appealed to me across the street, in the terms of an old music-hall song, to come and play with it. "O won't you come and play with me, and play with me, and play with me," sang the penny phonograph in the Corinium of the Romans. But it had a mellow persistent rival on my opposite side of the street, a few doors below the inn, the belfried head of the lovely old Perpendicular church. For I don't know how many years this clever old belfry which, naturally, does not approve of music-hall songs, has chimed the 113th Psalm every hour, not to mention other musical "selections" at all the other quarters. This too all night as well as all day. I have never been kept awake so beautifully in my life.

To the professional antiquary, with sufficient learning to read its romance, Cirencester museum must be one of the most

fascinating places in England. To the lay imagination, however, the most interesting relic loses something of its suggestiveness by its being removed into a museum, cut off, so to speak, from the life-root of its original relation and significance. A tesselated pavement seen where it has actually been laid down for nearly two thousand years means a great deal more to the romantic cyclist than it means when it has been taken up and relaid in a museum, however carefully relaid. So the Roman poetry of Cirencester centred for me in the old floor still *in situ* at "Bartons," the home of Earl Bathurst's factor, just to the right within Cirencester Park gates. When Pope and Swift used to visit their patron Earl Bathurst, this old floor was still hidden under the turf surrounding the old Jacobean house. Now it is walled and roofed in, and as you approach the house looks like any other out-building. Inside, however, panthers and geese, still of vivid colour, pace round in the circles of a striking

design, the floor curiously rolling in billows from the action of time and damp. There is a blithe schoolboy at an adjacent cottage who will, I am sure, be only too glad to show you the way down to "Bartons."

Having been to "Bartons," my interest in Cirencester faded. The church, beauful as it is outside, is not remarkable within, either æsthetically or historically. In fact the Corinium of the Romans is now an excellent example of a thriving handsome old country town, a prosperous wool-market, and a popular hunting-centre, — which reminds me of Bædeker's delicious summing-up of Faringdon in Oxfordshire: "Once a residence of the Saxon Kings, now famous for its ham and bacon!"

One of the several disputed sources of the Thames is situated within three miles of Cirencester, — the source of the Thames seems hardly less mysterious than the source of the Nile — but it did not lie on my path to the Cotswolds, so I left it unexplored.

CIRENCESTER

Before I speak of the Cotswolds, let me first copy down a nobly prosperous epitaph I found in Fairford churchyard. When I left Lechlade in the late afternoon, intent on calling in at Fairford church to see its famous stained glass, on my way to Cirencester, it suddenly struck me with a curious sense of surprise: "Why, it is Sunday! It will be half-past six before I can reach Fairford. I shall find the church being put to its ancient use. The people of Fairford will be at evening service." No one looks at stained glass on Sundays. But then what a unique opportunity to observe an ancient custom. The evening before, I had prayed to Astarte. This evening I would pray to another ancient God! It was strange! I arrived at Fairford in a great calm of sunset and mellow organ music laying a benedictory hand upon the beautiful old village. They were at prayers when I reached the porch, and reverently leaned my bicycle against a tomb. I was a little late, and must wait for some singing to slip in

quietly. Meanwhile, I occupied myself with copying this epitaph of the successful dead. Blessed are the dead who die with a good opinion of themselves: —

"*Beneath lies the Body of* ————, *Yeoman, who died at Quenington, 10 Aug. 1805, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. Industrious and successful. Faithful in the discharge of his relative duties (To his Superiours, Inferiours, his Equals and his Friends) He pass'd through this life, with the firmness of a man, And clos'd it with the fortitude of a Christian: He was followed to the Grave by Ten children whom he trained in the path of strict integrity, under the influence of the Sovereign Maxim — that this world is only a Passage to another.*"

Then, a hymn beginning, I stole in to where dim forms stood and sang in a painted dusk, and was much moved to assist at the beautiful old worship which still lingers on in certain remote parts of England. I listened too to a sermon of great antiquarian interest, on the text: "They shall come from the East and the

West, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out." The rector warned us against the dangers of several thousand years ago with much eloquence, and, meanwhile, I prayed to the painted windows.

CHAPTER XV

THE COTSWOLDS

The poet of the Cotswolds — Roman villa at Chedworth — The solitude and remoteness of the Cotswolds — Winchcombe — Pictures in the inn — The price of a lion and the price of a nightjar — The grave of Warren Hastings — Broadway — Evesham once more.

I FIRST heard of the Cotswolds through my friend Norman Gale, a perfunctory school-geography acquaintance with them, of course, not counting. He has talked to me of Long Compton as Adam might have talked of Paradise. And it was of him and his poetry I thought as I prepared to enter the Cotswolds by the Cirencester gate. "When time is weary of my company," I found myself saying, —

> "Here let me rest.
> If I should end within four walls
> With bricks around,
> Buy me no smoky patch of city ground,

But bring me to these acres of repose
Whose natural consecration is most sure,
That I may sleep beneath a country rose
And where the dew is pure;
For in this valley God appeared to me,
And where my soul is, let my body be.
What time the Father walked His earth
He trod, I know, these Cotswold slopes;
With silence and with sound
He clothed each mound;
The shadow of His robe goes over them,
The bounties of His wisdom cover them
And whoso cometh here
To tread this sod —
He sees the neighbour neighbourly,
And learning all Long Compton's loveliness
The better learns his God."

But, all the same, I will frankly confess that at first the Cotswolds disappointed me. Indeed, I am of opinion that to begin at Cirencester is to begin at the wrong end, though had I begun at Evesham as originally intended I should perhaps have encountered disappointment by having all the good things of the Cotswolds more or less at the beginning, with comparatively little left

for the conclusion of my journey. For the rise of the land from Cirencester, uninteresting stretches of rather dreary fields, is so gradual that it is quite a long while before one realises that we are on the hills at all. Not till one comes to the steep, and genuinely "dangerous" drop of the road down to "Foss Bridge" (on the great Roman Foss Way) does one begin to feel that the Cotswolds are really hills, after all. The corresponding climb on the other side still further convinces one.

Instead, however, of climbing that then and there, we may take it later on (for no such hill can really be escaped) by turning sharp to the left at Foss Bridge, and visiting the Roman villa at Chedworth; a relic genuinely stirring to the imagination, and highly in request for bucolic picnic parties. I found one of these in possession at a long trestle-table under the trees. It was a hot afternoon, and the sight of them suggested the goodness of tea. This picnic party had been supplied, I should

explain, by the keepers of the villa, who live in a house built among the ruins by the present lord of the manor. To my astonishment, however, I found that there was no tea for me, or any casual visitor. My tea was four or five miles off, no nearer than Northleach.

"You should have let us know beforehand. We cannot undertake to supply tea without notice."

I naturally asked how many weeks' notice they required for a cup of tea, but the remark did not help me, and I found a delightful old Congregational minister with a young ministerial disciple of his, in a like case. We commiserated with each other on the foolish injustice of the circumstance. We were the only people in the place who had the smallest interest in its significance. The no doubt excellent country-folk feasting in the cool shade would have been just as happy in any tea-garden, with its booths and swinging-boats. What recked they of the beautiful old tesselated floor as bright and as

level as when laid down? They were sped with tea-pots, and huge slices of cake. It was only we who really cared about the place that were denied refreshment, and denied it with some insolence. Yet we had to pay a fee to an attendant. Lord Eldon may perhaps be interested to hear of the matter. Perhaps this is his servants' idea of Ancient Roman hospitality.

With Northleach, lying in "a wrinkle" of the still dreary hills, one first encounters a typical Cotswold village, grim and even forbidding with sad stone. Four roads cross each other by a fortress-like old prison. To the right is Northleach, with a fine old church tower. There is little more to be said of it, and, to pursue my plan of making a sort of zig-zag route through the Cotswolds, I had to return to the cross roads and leave the prison on my right, making for Winchcombe. Then began the real Cotswolds, the great sweeps of friendly loneliness, the wide upland air, smelling of vast spaces:

another of the great solitudes of England. As you move up and down roads becoming more and more mere tracks along the side of fields, a tiny human being, with not another human being in sight, only an enormous sky, and enormous treeless billows of field on field, you grow as lonely as a crow, a mere speck as lost in the surrounding infinite as your voice is when you call out, to cheer yourself up.

As you wind more and more into the hidden heart of the hills, you are surprised to find that in this England, which we all talk of as if there was a railway station every quarter-of-a-mile, you have come upon a country where there is not even the usual candid turnpike; but where the Queen's highway has quietened down into a series of grassy bridle-ways twixt field and field, divided every few yards with gates, for which, if you are bicycling, you will do well to keep a careful eye. You begin to fear that you must be off your course. This cannot be a

highway in daily use for the imperial business. Surely one is trespassing in the byeways of some nobleman's estate, actually riding as sometimes one does through dreaming farmyards.

As for Winchcombe, you are simply precipitated into it down a narrow dark tunnel of road which not even the fool hath said in his heart that he dare ride. You can hardly imagine a real living market-town, literally so low down into the world. It gives one the impression of having been deliberately hidden in the heart of England, and I think there should be a silken cord along the devious byeways which connect it with the rest of the world, as with Rosamund's bower. I cannot believe that it is a real town yet, or that people with such serious interests in life as bacon and butter and wool would deliberately choose to live in so beautiful a hiding-place. The railway is six miles off, but — oh, horrible! — they are thinking of running a motor car into Cheltenham, where the railway I speak

of connects Winchcombe with the great world. In the old days of communication one wonders that Winchcombe ever got any news at all, though, of course, apart from the telegraph, its methods of communication with the adjacent posting towns are precisely the same as they were in the days of Monmouth's rebellion.

Queen Elizabeth lived during much of her young womanhood at the neighbouring castle of Sudeley. Certainly, in her day, it must have been at the very back of beyond. One congratulates nature — a mere matter of difficult hills — in thus keeping civilisation at bay within three hours of London. For all its remoteness, various dead and living people have thought it worth while to make Winchcombe an exceptionally picturesque village, exceptionally rich in old houses, and fortunate in its church.

It has two good inns. I stayed at the White Hart and as evening fell — with that alien and rather silly murmur and move-

ment of a country High Street, which comes with twilight and makes one feel so lonely — I made myself happy with some sporting pictures on the wall. This is a happiness I propose to share with the reader. I always feel that the true decorations for inn walls are pictures which symbolise the brutal zest of country sports. Long may it be before the Pre-Raphaelites find their way to Winchcombe. Give me instead Heenan and Sayers stripped for their great fight at Faringdon.

But the pictures I am thinking of represent nothing so dangerous. They represent the various seasons of the sportsman with charming spirit: symbolising the various forms of murder which it is proper for a country gentleman to engage in during the several months of the year. Of the long series calculated to whet any natural appetite for blood, I will describe only two.

In December it is the proper thing to murder ducks. You do it in a punt. In

the picture I am thinking of two gentlemen in top hats, blue frockcoats, duck trousers, and Wellington boots are engaged in this pleasing sport. One is kneeling in the act of discharging his piece, while the consequent dying duck squawks in mid air, and the duck evidently shot a moment before by the other gentleman, whose piece is being reloaded by a "gillie," is being carried to the shore by an eager dog. This picture bears for motto these spirited lines:

"Quick on the floating spoil, my spaniel,
Rush and drag them to the shore."

The other picture portrays a January scene. Its subject is snipe-shooting. Snow is on the ground in the neighbourhood of a lonely mill. A solitary gentleman in a green coat and top hat, attended once more by a re-loading gillie, has just shot a snipe, which is falling graphically against the sky. This picture has for its motto, —

"To-day we spring the snipe, and with
An eye as keen as does the bird himself."

This is the whole poem. What the bird "does" in this grammatical construction, I won't pretend to say; and no such pedantic criticism interfered with my joy in the naïve ferocity of these spirited old coloured prints, the innocent gusto of killing which pervades them. Seriously, there is something quite touching in the primitive point of view of these illustrations of the life of a country gentleman fifty years ago, — the pictures are dated 1846, — and I suppose the life has only changed in the costumes of those who still live it with a seriousness unimpaired by the "modern spirit."

There was one more visitor staying in the inn besides myself, an elderly gentleman rather important in manner. I felt a little like trying him with Lamb's question: "Excuse me, sir, but are you anybody of importance?" However, he presently told me that he was.

"I daresay you will know my name," he said (how happy I should have been to have felt so sure of his knowing mine!). "I am Mr. —— the naturalist."

Now he really *was* a well-known man, and it was, therefore, with absolute sincerity that I said,—

"Mr. ——! Why, I have known you and your wonderful menagerie since I was a boy. It is indeed a pleasure to meet you! One never knows! How full of romance life is!"

Then it occurred to me that here was a rare opportunity for seeking knowledge.

"Now," I said, "Mr. ——, would you mind telling me the cost of a lion?"

"A lion," answered the great naturalist, "would cost you something like three hundred and fifty pounds."

"And a lioness?"

"Well, of course, females always cost less; and a lioness, being much inferior in appearance, having none of the nobility of the male, costs hardly more than, say, a hundred and fifty pounds, or even less."

"I see," I said. "Then would you mind satisfying my curiosity on one more point: What would you ask me for a nightjar?"

"A nightjar? Well, the bird is not often asked for, but I think I could sell you an excellent nightjar for — seven-and-six!"

(Bird of the broken-heart — do you hear that!)

Then we talked of giraffes till bed-time, and that night I dreamed that the *Académie Française* had elected me as one of its immortals, and signalised the occasion by presenting me with a nightjar stuffed with gold!

Having lowered myself down into Winchcombe, my next morning's work was to pull myself out of it, in the direction of Stow-on-the-Wold, again due east, with a touch of south. Having the night before crossed the Cotswolds from east to west, I was now a little further north to cross them from west to east, then to tack due north to Moreton-in-

the-Marsh and finally northwest to Campden and Broadway and Evesham. Thus I thought, in a necessarily hasty survey, to take in most of the Cotswolds, and certainly my route proved excellently chosen for including the greatest number of hills. Then too I had chosen these various destinations for no better reason else than their beautiful names. That is as good manner of choice as any in the Cotswolds, where one old village has much the same general characteristics as another old village. The word "wold" has always stirred my imagination since I first met it at school in mad ravings: —

> "Saint Withold footed thrice the wold,
> He met the nightmare and her nine fold,
> Bid her alight and her troth plight,
> And aroint thee, witch! aroint thee!"

And what a word is "aroint." It is a word, as a witty music-hall performer recently said, that ought to be stuffed.

Stow-in-the-Wold is almost as high up in the world as Winchcombe is low down, a fine stone village up against the sky on a windy plateau of the hills. As for its history, I believe my visit there was as important as anything else that has befallen it. Still, it evidently considers itself something of a metropolis, for the innkeeper, at whose hands I enjoyed an excellent lunch and a long read in Kelly's Directory, remarked, on hearing that I had come from Winchcombe: "That is an out-of-the-world place if you like!" Strange that such difference should be etc.!

Yet, in a sense Stow-in-the-Wold has come very near to the sound of mighty "drums and tramplings," for scarcely more than a mile away, Warren Hastings lies in, I imagine, a little visited green corner of earth called Daylesford. Daylesford church is very tiny and quite trim and new, having been rebuilt as late as 1860. Almost as soon as you catch sight of it from the road, you see too a great

urn standing over a tomb beneath the east window. Something tells you that that is the tomb you seek, and, when you reach it, you find engraven upon it the words "Warren Hastings," simply as they are engraved across the Indian empire, though perhaps hardly so everlastingly. As one turned and looked round at the peaceful green hills on every side, it seemed strange to think what thundering avenues of fame converged at this point of quiet grass.

The original Daylesford church was as old as King Ethelwald (716–757). Warren Hastings, growing pious in his old age, as many men of blood have done, rebuilt it. A later lord of the manor, finding it too small, had it taken down, and again rebuilt in 1860. So that, really, Warren Hastings' urn is older than the present church near which it stands. On a tablet within the church one reads with mingled feelings, not untinged with irony, this inscription:—

In a Vault
Just beneath the Eastern Extremity
of this Church
Lies the body of the Right Honourable

WARREN HASTINGS,

of Daylesford House in this Parish
The First Governor General
of the British Territories in India
A Member of his Majesty's most Honble
Privy Council, L. L. D., and F. R. S.
The Last Public Effort
of Whose Eminently Virtuous,
And Lengthened Life;
Was the Re-Erection of this Sacred Edifice,
Which he Superintended
With Singular Energy and Interest
To its completion;
And in which alas!
The Holy Rites of Sepulture
were very shortly afterwards performed
over his mortal remains.
He died on the 22 of August, 1818,
aged 85 years and 8 months.

Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.

How as one reads this inscription one can see the great old man, probably a little doating, endeavouring to make his peace with heaven for — the Rohillas!

My next beautiful name was Moreton-in-the-Marsh, another typical Cotswold village, more big and prosperous looking perhaps than others. There, I understood, by application at the hospital, one might sit in the chair used by Charles I at his trial. Not for me to flout that most majestic, stupid, and ill-starred shade.

A little to the east lies Norman Gale's Long Compton, but I was growing impatient for letters at Evesham, so I left it for another year, consoling myself that, probably, I already possessed the essence of it in the lines I have already quoted, and that, like every beautiful country-place under heaven, its main charm was doubtless composed of green grass and blue sky and an inn. The many combinations in which I had already found these made me

conclude that I already knew Long Compton too.

My next halt was Chipping-Campden, a more than usually romantic looking village, preserving at its upper end some beautiful ruins with a still more beautiful story; the ruins of an old Cavalier's house deliberately burnt by its owner to save it from the Roundheads. It must have been an unusually noble house, for its remains have still great beauty. What treasures of human skill and human feeling were swallowed up in that madness of a king.

I suppose that, spectacularly, the finest prospect in the Cotswolds is that which you get from the heights which suddenly drop you down into Broadway. My personal preference is for less conventional arrangements of earth and sky, but there is no doubt that the view is very fine. Broadway too is the very pattern of the old English village one sees on the stage, and so to me lost something of its reality. Still you must go a long way be-

fore you come upon a more romantic old inn than the Lygon Arms. Five more miles of splendid road, and I was once more in Evesham, Evesham the rainy no longer, but Evesham full of genial sunset, and trustee on my behalf of quite a budget of pleasant letters — which, when one has hardly spoken to a soul for a week, are as good as a table-full of friends.

That night too I sat drinking my coffee in a quiet garden and opposite the veritable face of a friend. While our cigarette-ends glowed intermittently through the twilight, we sat and talked of the beauty of England, "a loveliness" which my friend has the power in his drawings to make still more lovely. It seemed strange to think that the garden where we sat thus tranquilly at the day's end was a part of the famous battlefield of Evesham. My friend's drawings are famous for their sense of "ancient peace," and he is the gentlest of men. Strange irony of time that he should come to live upon a

battlefield, though perhaps — another irony — there is no spot on earth so peaceful as an old battlefield. How still it was! but once I thought I heard the river running blood in the silence.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ENGLISH POET AND HIS HOME

Letters at Evesham — Death as a tester of values — Tabley House — Lord De Tabley's grave — A great brambler — Sir Peter Leycester — The old hall — The making of a poet — Lord De Tabley's poetry.

AMONG my Evesham letters were two invitations: one to spend a day or two with a friend of mine who combined philosophic radicalism and farming on a pleasant estate near Market Drayton; and the other to visit the home of that English poet in whose words a few chapters back I had prayed to Astarte at Avebury. I decided to visit Tabley first, and Market Drayton on my way south again.

Death is a great tester of the value of personalities. Some we had expected to

miss so much — is it impious to say it? — we miss hardly at all. The full significance of others to our general life, or more particularly to the life of the imagination, is not revealed to us till they are dead. Such personalities go on growing for us after death, with a singular reality and self-interpretation. Only when they are, or seem, beyond the reach of our recognition or sympathy, do we begin little by little to understand the wistful appeal they had been making — not specially to us, but to life. Thus only we begin to realise how much more they had to give us than we had seemed anxious to accept. Perhaps this is merely a posthumous reward of a reserved life. As certain poets, Tennyson, for example, have kept in reserve poems written in the spring and summer of their lives, to lend an unseasonable vitality to their winter volumes; so these dead that go on growing in the grave have, as it were, reserved something of themselves as a provision for the after life of memory. They would

not give all, or tell all, during life — those clever dead ones (and how clever are the dead!) — they would leave something for us to wonder about, to say "maybe," or "if we only could know," or "if only we might question them now when it is too late." I suppose that really no one has thus withheld themselves with conscious economy, and I am quite sure that the poet of whom I am thinking — John Byrne Leicester Warren, Lord De Tabley — never did so. Yet such is the practical outcome of such wistful reserved lives. Abundant self-revealing lives, however they appeal to a taste for such self-revelation, are apt to satisfy it during life. For example, Dickens bequeathed no mystery concerning himself that was not a mystery during his life-time. Scott, equally, was a public secret. Byron told all he knew about himself long before Missolonghi. For rapidity and voluminousness of self-revelation Byron has never been surpassed.

I had thought that I knew Lord De

Tabley's poetry somewhat exactly during his life, for some measure of his friendship I had been privileged to enjoy had originated in that exact and admiring knowledge. Yet when he died, I found myself, so to speak, suddenly eager for "further information." I read all his letters again, read parts of them, I felt, for the first time; and I got all the scattered volumes of "William Lancaster," "M. A.," "John Leicester Warren" together, well known as, separately, they were, that I might resolutely attempt a more intimate understanding of one whom, after his death, I suddenly cared more to study than ever I had cared during his life. When some writers die, and perhaps some time before, we feel that there is no longer any necessity to go on reading their books. Their books had, so to speak, existed as an extension of their physical existence; that physical existence withdrawn, their books wither with them, as the eyes fade with the stopping of the heart, or the flower

withers with its severance from the root. On the other hand there are writers whom one seems only to begin to read when they have passed beyond writing. Many of us read Lord De Tabley very enthusiastically, missing no single sumptuous word, while he still lived and wrote; but I think it likely that the experience of such readers since his death is very like mine, — that they have suddenly realised that they had needed to know him better than they previously did, suddenly found themselves wondering and asking about him, and turning to his books, already maybe read and marked many times, for some further satisfaction and some completer answers.

Probably there is no better rough test of the vitality of poetry than our automatically remembering it at moments of emotional or social need. If a line springs into our minds, and insists upon being quoted, at moments when our mood is not consciously "literary" in its demands, the line has reason to congratulate itself

and the poet who made it. Evidently, it is living poetry; for it can still minister to the expressional needs of a living man. Those needs, of course, are many, and some of them do not cry out for an extravagant supply. One does not often need a hymn to Astarte, but one is perhaps the more grateful for knowing where to find it when one does need one.

Lord De Tabley used to hint to his friends that he possessed a charming old place in Cheshire which he was far too poor adequately to keep up. It was no affectation — he had no affectations — but I have reason to know that it was something of an exaggeration. At all events, it was an opinion on his part which for many years deprived his Cheshire tenantry of his presence among them, — a presence for which they had, in spite of his vague comings and goings, and probably learned from his botanising boyhood amongst them, a touching affection. The day or two spent in his old home,

listening as it were to the echoes of his footsteps about the rooms, seemed to go some way to satisfy those cravings for knowledge of him, to answering those questions, to which I have made reference.

In the big Georgian drawing-room of new Tabley House, the piety of the sister who was lifelong his closest friend has filled a case with characteristic relics of him, which combine to make a charming and touching symbol of his life. In the centre is a photograph of him as last taken. To those who knew him its perhaps necessary inadequacy will matter little. They will be able to fill in from memory what it lacks. Those who did not know him will realise a noble head, with, as has been well said, something "hierarchical" about it, with its "long rippled grey hair": a head not unlike Mr. George Meredith's. But they will miss the indefinable distinction, as of a god in exile, with which he carried it, and the mingled gentleness and sympathy

and almost fierceness of his melancholy but all-observant blue eyes. A lock of his childhood's golden hair lies side by side with a grey lock from that hierarchical head we know. Little bowls filled with Greek coins, his book-plates, his last gathered flowers, a page of his MS., his quill pen, speak of his several enthusiasms and the variety of his accomplished work. There is a world which knows him as perhaps the greatest European authority on brambles, and that is why you find brambles growing over his grave in Little Peover churchyard, brambles growing in soil taken, I have read, "from a certain covert where he had loved to botanise." Sir Mounstuart Grant Duff has printed a letter in which we get a charming glimpse of Leicester Warren, the passionate brambler:

"And so," he writes, "you have actually taken a walk with Wirtgen! Well, I envy you. He is one of the best bramblers in Europe, and his name has long been a household word to me. Alas! the Rubi people are

fading fast — Bloxam and now poor Areschoug have joined the majority. The last was a charming Swede, professor at Lund, and he came over here for a month or so years back. His ardour was such that, seeing a new and promising bramble bush, he would plunge into it for specimens like the Guards' charge at Waterloo, and emerge eventually streaming with gore from face and hands. He had undertaken the light job of investigating Rubus in Europe, and was after the original and primordial *Typus*, which he suspected was *Rubus Leesii*, and was to be the ancestor of all the cousinhood of blackberries and raspberries in existence. I fear he has left this monography unfinished. Life is short and brambles are interminable."

It is probable that Lord De Tabley, great as were his ambitions as a poet, would have chosen to be remembered rather as the botanist of "The Flora of Cheshire," which since his death his sister Lady Leighton has published as an appropriate monument to his memory. In this it is not difficult to note the reappearance of a form of ambition to which his family owes

its most illustrious name. A passion for county history, so to speak, was in his blood; for the pioneer of county historians, the Sir Peter Leycester of the "Antiquities of Cheshire" was his most famous and most individualised ancestor. "I wish," said Sir Peter in regard to his historical activities, "this may incite some more able hand to undertake the like for the revising of those decayed Monuments of Antiquity, in the other Hundreds of this our County, which yet lie buried and covered in the Rubbish of Devouring time."

Thus in making a Cheshire "Flora" Lord De Tabley was pursuing an inherited bent. Sir Peter's hobby had not been botany but genealogy, yet both were scientific studies pursued in the honour of Cheshire. Sir Peter, like most Antiquaries, was very industrious, and he has left behind him much accumulation of manuscripts, from which I print the following memoranda concerning his ancestors, memoranda interesting not only in their present connection,

but for the occasional quaintness of their phrasing: —

"Sir Nicholas de Leycester, Knight, was Seneschall to the greate subject & favourite Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln & Constable of Cheshire, in the reigne of K. Edward I, about A. D. 1288. This Nicholas had to wife Margaret, daughter of Sir Geoffrey Dutton, 1276, which Margaret had by the gift of her Father, the townshippe of Nether Tabley & the Manour of Wethall in Aston, in w^h^ tymes it was usual to give landes for fortunes."

"Roger Leycester, son of Sir Nicholas and Margaret, bought out all the freeholde landes in Nether Tabley, about the beginning of Edwd. III's raigne; w^h.^ were helde of him, & were given awaye by his ancestour Galfrid, sonne of Adam de Dutton, long before; the Principall whereof was that of William Hart, w^h.^ had continued in foure descents in the name of Hart; & he maide the towne solely and entirely his owne; howbeit he was chief Lorde long before, as is above demonstrated."

"Roger dyed about A. D. 1349."

"This Roger lived constantly at his Manour of Wethall where he had a Park in the reigne of K. Edwd. II."

"IVth in descent from Sir Nicholas was JOHN DE LEYCESTER, who served in the Warres of France under John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, of whose puissant Army our Histories make mention, & yet brought very few alive to Bordeaux, being starved to death for want of water; but John Leycester returned safe, & had allowed him at Southampton, on the Eve of S^t. John, 49 Edwd. III. A.D. 1375, lib. 205 : sol. 13 : den. 4, for the payment of Jenkyn Mobberley, Esqre, & the soldiers who served under him, & also for his own paye, who had allowed unto him, for himself for 210 dayes, (at 3 shillings the daye,) the sum of lb. 31 : den. 10 : s. 0. He had also forgiven him in that account, (w^h. I conceive to be as a rewarde, or gratuity,) lib. 38 : sol. 10 : den. 0, & thereupon he gave to Lady Ffelton a white ambling Palfrey."

"This JOHN LEYCESTER married JOANE dau^t. of Robert Tinchet, & built the Hall of Nether Tabley, in the place where it yet standeth, about the beginninge of the raigne of K. Richard II.

w^h. was then called the New Hall of Nether Tabley; the old Hall stood a little higher in a place now called the Saphyrne-yoards, w^h. old Hall I take to have been the seat of the Harts of Tabley, whose freeholde landes were bought by Roger Leycester; w^h. old Hall was encompassed with a narrow sluice or trench of water, where the Ditch, or Trench, yet remayneth to bee seene w^h. encompassed it about. Nor must we imagine but that this New Hall hath, since the foundation of it, been much changed & altered; howbeit I conceive the very fabricke of the Roome called the Hall, (now remayninge, Ann.: 1647,) to have been parte of the Ancient Fabricke, w^h. without repayre cannot stand longe. — It was repayred Anno 1671."

"WILLIAM LEYCESTER DE TABLEY, (sonne and heyre of John & Joane,) is the first that I find stiled de Tabley, who resided constantly at his Manour House of Nether Tabley, which his Father JOHN had erected, & where his heyres & successours have ever since fixed their habitation to this day (1675)."

"Xth in descent from Sir Nicholas, was PETER LEYCESTER, who married ALICE dau: of SIR JOHN HOLFORD, of Holford, 21 Hen: VIII,

1529. He built the bricke stable with the granary at the end thereof, belonginge to the Hall at Nether Tabley. He dyed 1577, 19 Eliz: & was buryed at Greate Budworth, in his appropriate buriall place in Our Lady Marye's Chappell at the N. side of the said Church, ann: ætat: suæ 70. This Peter was famous for his hospitalities, stiled the good Housekeeper; his inventories of Cattel & Household goods then amounted to lib. 338: den. 12: s. 4 wherein 44 Cowes were apprised at lib. 1: den. 10: s. 0 a piece, 30 oxen at lib. 2: den. 10: s. 0 a piece, 2 Stalled oxen at lib. 8: den. 0: s. 0, which in our dayes, at this present, would take at least lib. 24: den. 0: s. 0."

"This same Peter killed one Henry Newhall, upon some wrangle, whereupon he was forced to sue for his Pardon, dated 30 Hen: VIII 1538."

"DOROTHY, widow of Adam Leycester, (XIIth in descent from Sir Nicholas,) and dau^r. of Peter Shakerley, of Houlme, buryed at Nether Peover 1630, built the Gate House of Nether Tabley Hall."

"PETER LEYCESTER, (son of Adam and Dorothy, and XIIIth in descent from Sir Nicholas) was but three years old when his Father dyed, & was ward to his Mother, who compounded with the Queen for his Wardship, by means whereof, & want of education, he suffered much both in his Estate and Person. He married ELIZABETH, dau^r. of SIR RANDLE MAINWARING of Peover, A. D. 1611, 9th Jan:, and had issue, (with others,) PETER, who composed this table or treatise, born A.D. 1613, and is yet living, (1647) and dyed on Tuesday the 7th day of March, 1647, about sixe of the clocke at night, and was buryed at Greate Budworth on the Saturday followinge."

"This Peter and Elizabeth erected the new Milles of ffree stone, under the Hall of Nether Tabley, A.D. 1630; pulling downe the old Mille w^h. stood a little more remote neare the stone bridge in the High Street."

"PETER LEYCESTER, sonne and heyre of Peter and Elizabeth, married ELIZABETH dau^r. of GILBERT LORD GERARD, of Gerard's Bromley, 1642, was created a Baronet 12th Car: II 1660, and was one of the Deputy Lieutenants

of Cheshire. This Peter had the whole Estate past over to him by his Father 1636."

"This same PETER built the bricke wall about the garden and Halle of Nether Tabley, A.D. 1656, and with the wash House also; he likewise built the Drawing Roome by the Parlour with the Balcony at the top thereof, and, joyntly with his Sonne, 1671, repayred the Hall of Nether Tabley. — Sir Peter Leycester also built the chappell at the Manour Hall of Nether Tabley, at his owne sole cost and charge, who with his owne hand did lay the first foundation stone thereof the 29th day of June, 1675, commonly called St. Peter's day."

"IVth in descent from this Sir Peter, and XVIIIth in descent from Sir Nicholas, was another & last, SIR PETER, who built (after the designs of Mr. Carr of York) and first inhabited the New Hall in Nether Tabley, now called Tabley House, which was finished during the minority of his son. This Sir Peter married CATHERINE, daughter and co-heir of SIR WILLIAM LE FLEMING, Baronet, of Rydall, and had issue Sir John le Fleming Leicester, b: 1762, who with his two brothers and one sister, were the last Leicesters born in the old Hall."

[*Note by the last Lord De Tabley*]

"When the family left the Old Hall to dwell at the New House, a considerable portion of the old Hall containing, I conceive, the principal living rooms, was pulled down, and only the more ancient part of it left standing, as it still exists in these present days, 1880."

"On the spot where stood these living rooms was planted by Catherine Lady Leicester an Acorn, which has now become a spreading Oak Tree — 1884."

To this may be added an interesting note by an intermediate Leycester in regard to the chapel, still in beautiful preservation, with the plate and other sacred accessories, as Sir Peter left it; and still the private chapel of the Tabley tenants: —

"The last & best Chappell was built of Bricke & Stone at the Manour Hall of Nether Tabley, by Sir Peter Leycester, baronet, situated in the very South-East Corner of the Garden, with the Poole, close to the Poole side; begun upon the 29th day of June, A.D. 1675 upon a Tuesday, & was finished within & completed

A.D. 1678, the last day of May. John Birchenough, of Over Alderley, Maister Mason, William Merriman, of Nether Tabley, Chiefe Bricklayer, John Kell, of Over Tabley, Carpenter; and Ephraim Broadhurst, of Nether Knutsford, Joyner, who took his pattern from Brasennose Colledge Chappell, in Oxford. But Broadhurst dyed before the work was finished."

This record of the craftsmen employed would have delighted William Morris. It is to be feared that the bricklayers of our modern sacred edifices pass unchronicled. Such records speak very eloquently of the personal dignity attaching even to the humblest handicraftsmen in the days when English "artisans" felt themselves to belong, in however minor degrees, to the "mystery" of a beautiful art.

It was upon a nice question of ancestry that Sir Peter engaged in a pamphlet war with a neighbouring knight, which locally and temporarily made him more famous than his "Antiquities." His neighbour, Sir Thomas Mainwaring of Peover, and Sir Peter Leycester himself, had a remote an-

cestress in common, Amicia, daughter of Earl Hugh Cyvelioc (about 1129 to 1177). The question was one of her legitimacy. Sir Peter in his "Antiquities" had decided that she was illegitimate. Sir Thomas furiously supported the other view, and some fifteen pamphlets were needed to thrash out the difference of opinion. These can still be read by the abnormally curious in the publications of the "Chetham Society." The controversy evidently made some amusement for the Cheshire gentry, for a ballad preserved in the Ashmolian MSS. records in doggerel the famous encounter of

> "Two famous wights, both Cheshire Knights,
> Thomas yclept & Peter. . . ."

Sir Peter was a valiant royalist and churchman. We find the royalist suffering for the cause, compounding for his estate to the sum of £778. 18. 4.; and after the Restoration we find the churchman vigorously persecuting a "seditious" clergyman of his neighbourhood, one

Adam Martindale, because he would not read the proclamation against unauthorised religious meetings, "conventicles," and so forth. The last Lord De Tabley once contested Mid-Cheshire in the Liberal interest, but it is evident that his famous ancestor was an uncompromising Tory.

The name of "Byrne" and with it the broken harp, this of double significance upon Lord De Tabley's grave, came into the family with the death, in 1742, of Sir Francis Leicester, son of Sir Peter Leycester; when the estates passed to his grandson, a boy of nine, son of Sir John Byrne of Timogue, an Irish baronet by Sir Francis Leicester's daughter Meriel. The name "Warren" and most of its wealth were added to the family at the same time. Sir John Byrne's mother was Anna Dorothea Warren, of Poynton in Cheshire; and by this connection later on in the history of the family, the wealth of the Warrens was to be diverted into the Leicester coffers; as by his marriage settlement Sir John Byrne had contracted to

change his name to Leicester and to sell out his other estates and to invest the money round Tabley. Owing to Sir John Byrne's death, his infant son, Sir Peter Byrne, had to fulfil these conditions, he being the first to bring together the three names, Byrne, Leicester, Warren. The Byrnes were descended from the old kings of Leinster, and the Warrens from William the Conqueror, whose daughter Gundred married the first Earl Warren. The chief genealogical distinction and the main wealth of the family thus came of the marriage of Meriel Leycester and her father's astute will. Its peerage and its Turners came into the family together with Sir Peter Byrne Leicester's son who was created first Lord De Tabley in 1826. He was a great friend of the Prince Regent — the immense stables at Tabley still commemorate the friendship — and a generous and intelligent patron of painters. He devoted himself to the encouragement of the English School, and in 1818 opened in London the first gallery ever

hung exclusively with the work of British artists. Of Turner he was a specially generous patron. Hence the Turners which hang in the drawing-room at Tabley.

"How many suns it takes to make one speedwell blue!" sings the modern poet. No doubt if the genealogies of all notable poets had been as carefully recorded as that of Lord De Tabley, it would be found that any one of them had taken no less making than he, who, whatever his ancestral distinctions, is so far the crowning product of his line. A poet being Nature's culminating achievement costs very much to make. The blood of warriors, of beautiful women, of curious students, must meet in the alembic of his brain. Byrne and Leicester and Warren were needed to make John Byrne Leicester Warren. But while he remains the final flower of much old-world strength and beauty, he has one rival as a symbolic expression of the vigorous past of his ancestors: the old moated hall down among the trees of the park, which, though now unoccupied by living Leicesters, is

very carefully preserved for such of dead or living as care still to dream in its old rooms. Rich as England is in old houses, — gables and black oak and dreams, — it can hardly contain a more perfect or more appealing embodiment of its masterful and musical past than Tabley Old Hall. The smallness of the place does much to help the effect, for, since it was built on its moated island, in the reign of Richard II., it has lost several of its rooms, as it has put on a Jacobean front. This smallness saves it from seeming a museum, and preserves it as a home, a home broken-hearted by the long absence of all who once peopled it with gay and forcible life — yet one might fancy, still keeping itself ready in a hope-against-hope for returning feet. We often say that certain old houses make one feel that their long dead occupants have only left them a few moments ago; just flung out of doors to go a-hawking, or just left the tapestry-frame to gather flowers in the meadows. The fancy is indeed hackneyed enough, — yet there are

a few old houses that really inspire it. You seldom feel, as at Tabley, that the hall fire has only just gone out; that indeed a new log might even now set it going again. Warm human breath still seems to hang in the rooms. Local sentimentalists have invented vulgar ghosts for its occupants to Lady Leighton's very natural indignation. Haunted indeed the place is, but only as a room is haunted where some exquisite lady stood a moment ago at her harpsichord, or an old scholar laid down his still open book in the window, to take the air up and down his garden walks.

To any sufficiently damp-resisting person Tabley Old Hall is still comfortably habitable. It is a paradise of old oak, — there is a Queen Elizabeth bed to sleep in, — and its walls are hung with many a curious decorative device of the past. Among these is a Jacobite relic of particular interest; one of those "perspectives" which are found in only one or two Jacobean collections. It is a grotesque

portrait of Charles II. elongated broadways out of all recognition. The idea was to place it on a table and set an upright cylinder of polished steel beside it: in the cylinder, by some simple optical law, the distorted features became normal and recognisable and you drank reverentially to the king across the water.

There is in the Hall, with its unusually massive roof-beams, a very curious fireplace, dated 1619, of carved, gilded and coloured wood, bearing rude figures of Cleopatra and Lucrece. It is this fireplace of which Lord De Tabley is thinking in a long and elaborate passage of his "Soldier of Fortune." Says Conrad to Violet, as they stand before the coloured and embossed chimney-piece: —

"What have we here;
Fables in wood? Figures in allegory
Crowning the hearth? 'T is quaint this sculptured text,
For him who warms to read. Lend me the key
Of all this coloured triumph, hares and hounds:
Lucrece and Cleopatra: each i' th' act
Of letting the red passionate life away,

She with a point, she with a brace of vipers:
'T is pitiful to see them stare and do it."

Violet answers with her sad fancies, and Conrad asks again: —

". . . I smile not: give me more; explain
This mystic carving, apex of the screen,
Roofing the storied interludes beneath,
Dogs, dog-sized hares, and moribund great queens —
Declare this emblem. Here 's a naked child
Recumbent with an hour-glass in its hand,
And the sand-cups are winged as Hermes' heels:
While a great human-faced profile of sun
Rays in athwart the infant on its bed."

Violet's reading of the riddle is too long to quote.

But most fascinating to me is the old Herb-garden where still grow all the herbs just as they used to: Wild Thyme, Star of Bethlehem, Wormwood, Spikenard ("very precious"), Balm of Gilead, Rue, St. James' Wort, Black Helebore, Balm for the Warrior's Wounds, Borage, etc. To keep this old Herb-garden well-stocked was one of the fancies of the playful side of Lord De Tabley as a

serious botanist. The Library at Tabley is almost as rich in old herbals as in old poets. Perhaps the most valuable outcome of that love for flowers and herbs is the exact natural history of Lord De Tabley's poetry. In this he is at least the equal of Tennyson.

So I may end as I began with his poetry. That poetry, I hold, is destined to take a higher place in Victorian poetry than it has yet taken. I am prepared to admit its limitations. It lacks fusing emotion. It is a poetry of lines rather than of whole poems: yet if the truth were told, should not the same be said of most poetry that we value? The architectural canon of complete harmonious edifices of song is rather an arbitrary ruling of fashion than an eternal law of poetic art; and it is easily proven so. There is something limited in any so-called "perfect whole," even, perhaps, the very greatest. You can only, to speak like an Irishman, get everything in — by leaving something out, and that something is usually the

very thing we want in, the sense of what we call the infinite, without and within a human temperament. The eighteenth century was rich in "perfect wholes," but who would not prefer a single rich Elizabethan line to some "perfect whole" by Pope? Besides, a fine line *is* a "perfect whole." Sun, moon, and stars are in it. It is a microcosm, no less than the most ambitious poetical structure. Thus, many so-called imperfect poems are more valuable by their splendid flashes than other poems perfectly illuminated throughout. Blake (or even Crashaw) is a more important poet than Gray. Gold is gold, however irregularly minted; and a pocketful of silver is not equal to a handful of gold. I have just tested Lord De Tabley in his most vulnerable play: "The Soldier of Fortune" — anything but a "perfect whole." I have drunk a glass or two from the enormous hogshead, but what a wine! Must I drink it all at once to prove it a noble vintage?

"No girl
Mewed in a silken chamber from the air
And the great living wind of human deed;
But out with him among the whirling leaves
Of mortal wishes, letting all the rain
Of the world's weepings sweep against my face. . . ."

"Lo, at my window, there I had a dream
Watching the lands of sleep with open eyes."

"Thy life is like a phantom with a torch
Groping her way in chambers underground,
To find white ashes, dust in broken urns."

"So shall my Life creep to some charnel-porch,
And grovel in the bitter grass of graves,
And rest her live cheek on a lettered tomb,
And prone reach out her palms beyond her head,
And so lie steeped in that strange light which flares
Out of a sun low swimming, moribund,
Just ere the fingers of an ink-black cloud
Creep out and crawling upwards grip at me,
And drown me downwards in the dark gulf dead."

"Then let us sew
To cure sore eyes: our tapestry was traced
In a design of leaning rose-heads bunched
With orange-globes of myrtle; pansies rubbed
In wreaths against the blue-black cheeks of grapes;
And strawberries wild, which underpeeped blue arches
Of curly hyacinths. We'll change all that.

Sad sewers make sad samplers. We 'll be sorry
Down to our fingers-ends, and broider emblems
Native to desolation — cypress-sprays,
Yew-tufts and hectic leaves of various autumn,
And bitter tawny rue, and bent black thorns."

I have purposely chosen these extracts from Lord De Tabley's conspicuous failure. The last quotation suggests another from his more accepted work. Perhaps he has never been excelled in the art of tapestry poetry, of which I quote this remarkable example from "Circe": —

"And near this tulip, reared across a loom,
Hung a fair web of tapestry half done,
Crowding with folds and fancies half the room:
Men eyed as gods and damsels still as stone,
Pressing their brows alone,
In amethystine robes,
Or reaching at the polished orchard globes,
Or rubbing parted love-lips on their rind,
While the wind
Sows with sere apple leaves their breast and hair.
And all the margin there
Was arabesqued and bordered intricate
With hairy spider things
That catch and clamber,
And salamander in his dripping cave
Satanic ebon-amber;

Blind worm, and asp, and eft of cumbrous gait,
And toads who love rank grasses near a grave,
And the great goblin moth, who bears
Between his wings the ruined eyes of death;
And the enamelled sails
Of butterflies, who watch the morning's breath,
And many an emerald lizard with quick ears
Asleep in rocky dales.
And for an outer fringe embroidered small,
A ring of many locusts, horny-coated,
A round of chirping tree-frogs merry-throated,
And sly fat fishes sailing, watching all."

It would be easy to produce finer things than these in support of one's admiration of Lord De Tabley's poetry; but I assume that the reader is familiar with the two volumes of selections which won for their writer an Indian summer of praise. I am glad, however, to know that before long he is to be represented in something like a complete reissue of his work. At all events, his very fine "Orestes," — after "Atalanta in Calydon" the finest poetical tragedy on the Greek model in English, — should not be allowed to remain in obscurity. I hope, too, for a volume of his delightful letters.

CHAPTER XVII

A SHROPSHIRE SQUIRE

Father of his people — A country philosopher — The making of a cheese — A farmer's wife and her daughters.

THE sad music of Tabley was still in my heart as the train set me down at Market Drayton, — a name that I have always liked so much on the map, that I have wished too to see it written broad and smiling across the fat green pastures of a county whose name again seems made of cheese and butter. Shropshire! the name of no other English county smells so of the dairy.

My friend is in a sense a lonely man, living among his books and his farms, and his melioristic dreams — as lonely as a man can be who finds touched hats and familiar country "good evenings" every few yards as he drives a friend from the

station to his house. His great ancestral hall is let, for he, like a philosopher, prefers a smaller house, just big enough for himself, his books, his friends and a few bottles of old wine. His study-window looks over a wide expanse of green valley, with the broad pyramid of "the Wrekin," —another romantic word,—looming some miles away. Much of the green earth he can see from his window, and more that he cannot, is his in trust from Nature, to till and fertilise. How well he fulfils that trust I could read in the faces of farmers' wives and busy cottage housekeepers, as he took me to see a cheese made, and generally to survey the country life the morning after my arrival.

Father of his people! One felt he was that in every cheery salutation, and when a man is that, what system in the world is more comfortable and kindly all round than our half feudal, half agricultural, scheme of things? Though we were in Shropshire, it was Cheshire cheese that was being made in the great metal vat,

and, loving that cheese of old, I asked the farmer's wife, a bright good little hard-working needle of a woman, why it was so hard to get Cheshire cheese in London, and kindred questions. Meanwhile, a comely daughter had turned up the sleeves from her round arms and was rolling into a canvas the thick soft custard-like crust which the milk, acted upon by rennet, had already thrown up to the surface, the residual milk, thus robbed of its sweet fatness, rushing out through an opened tap.

The mother was evidently happy in her daughters, and they in her and the life of the farm. "Yes! they were good girls," the mother told us; "they were not for ever wanting to be in Market Drayton or Shrewsbury" (the London of Shropshire), "lossicking" and novel-reading, like some girls. They loved their home, and their work; "and you know, sir," she added, "farm-work is not done with gadding about."

I could believe her, for it has always seemed to me that of all lives on earth

that of a farmer's wife and her daughters is the hardest. Yet it is a kind of hard work which brings its peculiar satisfactions, and it often seems to develop a certain sturdiness and purity of character; though, I 'm afraid it too often reflects in its human instruments the hardness and stockishness of the earth with which they have to deal. At all events there was a certain worn spirituality in the face of this Shropshire farmer's wife, which seemed to speak of a life of hard work honestly and cheerfully done, as old silver speaks of long use. She had become more beautiful than her daughters by the sheer strain of strenuous living. And to "let the ducks out" at 4.30 of a summer morning and thus begin your long day is pretty strenuous living, though think how wonderful is the world at 4.30 of a summer's morning. There is something to be said for work that compels us to hear the morning stars singing.

As we mounted the stairs to the cheese-room the Squire asked our hostess why she did n't let some of her rooms to summer

visitors. She had thought of it, she said, but she feared that her cooking might prove too humble. She was all right on simple dishes, joints and puddings, but, she added, in a phrase which particularly delighted me, "I should be *lost* with jellies."

In the cheese-room were arranged something like a hundred cheeses, of various dates, awaiting the visit of the buyers upon their rounds. The high priestess allowed us to taste one or two, plunging one of those fascinating scoops into their fat yellow sides. It is *the* way to eat cheese. And what a monument was each rich cylinder to the industry of the little woman who took it all in the day's work, and never realised for a moment what a valuable human being she was, of a type which we are sometimes told is disappearing, but which I fancy will never disappear from our, on the whole, very conscientious hard-working world. I suppose she would resent a cheese in marble for her tombstone, with the inscription:

"She made good Cheshire cheese — and six beautiful daughters;" and yet, when you think what would be implied in the inscription, what prouder monument would any of us ask?

After tasting the Shropshire meadows once more in the form of home-made bread and home-made butter, we went to try the herb-beer of a dear old lady who lived down the lane. We found her happy in a visiting daughter-in-law, a bright Cockney girl whose husband was at that moment serving the Queen at Aldershot. She was already the mother of two children, one visible in her arms, the other invisible. But, I 'm afraid, their daddy is by this long since in South Africa. For the sake of that bright young mother's face I hope his was not among the names I read in this morning's paper.

So from farm to cottage, from cottage to farm, the Squire and I wandered, and I wish you could have heard him talk, and see the gentle light on his face. A happy

man, surely, for all the sadness in his smile. Yet, *is* it true that to make so many other people happy is to be happy oneself?

The day done, we sat in his study discussing his various dreams of a better land, where each man should be his own agriculturalist and the golden age return. We talked too of books. How could we help it with so many of the best of them around us! Strange little company of poets and philosophers looking out incongruously upon the grazing sheep, and the quiet hills. I often think of you, and of him who sits by the lamp with open book at evening, and wish that mine had been a day so well spent. Benedicite!

EPILOGUE

Put by the wheel, the summer's done,
The world is white that once was green,
My fellow-traveller the sun
Scarce once in a whole week is seen.

The snow is falling on the lawn,
Soft blankets muffle every tree,
And nine o'clock is called the dawn,
And lamps come in at half-past three.

Only the harder sort of birds,
That eat and eat but never sing,
Swoop hurriedly with greedy words
To snatch a morsel on the wing;

And you may trudge a hundred miles
Nor meet a single wandering bee.
Great summer with your thousand smiles,
Have you then smiled your last on me?

EPILOGUE

Have you no hidden scented lane
Where I may find my love a rose?
Or must she wait till spring again
The horn of resurrection blows?

Yea! Rose and Nightingale have fled
Together from the winter's breath,
The old warm summer things are dead,
And nothing is alive but death;

Nothing alive this winter's day
But only death where'er one turns, —
Ah! no, beneath the frozen clay
A fire of flowers already burns.

Soon shall be pierced this icy mail
With prick of many a flowery spear,
And, flushed with sun and blind with hail,
The buried summer reappear.

Ah! then again the ways shall be
Green carpets for the traveller laid,

EPILOGUE

And I in merry company
Eat bread and honey in the shade.

Ah! then again to roam and roam,
Unfettered, fearless, free, and far, —
With, best of all, the coming home
At evening with the bedtime star.

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